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CHURCH-TOWN

JOHN TREVENA

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MOYLE CHURCH-TOWN

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A NOVEL

BY
JOHN TREVENA

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MOYLE CHURCH-TOWN

1873

PART I

CHAPTER I

A FEW LINES OF FORGOTTEN HISTORY

THERE was never a place like Cornwall for ghosts and fairies. People far east of Tamar might boast of local imps and apparitions ; nor would any envious Saxon deny that Dartmoor was a famous upland with its dancing maidens, mischievous pixies, whist-hounds, and hunting parsons, whose bodies were as dead as door-nails, but whose spirits frisked maliciously upon earth, until "laid" by the spells of magic in snuff-boxes and beer-bottles. Besides, the evil one himself was always going up and down between Tavistock and Widdecombe, collecting the signatures of those who were ready to dispose of their souls in return for services. Did he not once have a set-to with Sir Francis Drake ; from which contest my lord Beelzebub retired with two of the blackest eyes ever recorded, and a nose which had never been so mauled since St. Dunstan caught it in his pincers ?

If any man declares that Cornish ghosts and fairies are not superior to all British imps and apparitions, whatsoever, we challenge that person to meet us next full moon upon the summit of Whist Tor—now known as Yes Tor—where the Master of the Black Hunt was wont to kennel the Windy Hounds ;

and there, having pommeled him sorely with fist and argument, we shall leave him to be pinched to death.

"Ah! here's an error in the first page," cries the man with the long forefinger. "West-country fairies are as British as a Yorkshire boggart."

Wise man, remember we are dealing with the crooked writing and yellow parchment of folk-lore: these records are much decayed, the sheets fall to pieces in our hands, while the ink comes away in flakes. Hast ever heard of the man in the moon? Of course you have, but that is no reason why you should point the long forefinger and look cunning. The man in the moon is British for this reason:

Once upon a time the territory which is now the moon broke off from this earth; and if it had not broken off it must have become a part of the British Empire; while the man in the moon would have pulled a stick from his faggot, fastened to it the Union Jack, and sung "By Jingo!" ever afterwards. That is good folk-lore reasoning and sound romantic logic. Some of us happen to know that, when the moon was switched off into space, there was no West of England beyond Plymouth: daring folk will argue there was no Plymouth either, but we shall reply that, as the Sound was there, the town could not have been far off. The very day after the man in the moon left with all his land—it is clearly established that he was being troubled a great deal by certain commissioners who lived in mud huts beside the Thames upon the precise site where, by a curious coincidence, certain speech-grinding chambers were subsequently erected—a mighty wave struck the extreme western coast; and when it had subsided the mayor and corporation of Plymouth were amazed to behold, floating towards them, a big island, which had obviously just risen from the bottom of the sea; for it was all wet and glistening, besides being covered with shell-fish and seaweed. It reached the mainland with

such a bump that the mayor and corporation fell in a dignified fashion upon their backs, while those of no account sprawled anyhow upon their faces: recovering their feet, they hastened to explore the island, which had already fastened itself to the mainland, so neatly that not even a seam was visible; and quickly discovered it to be populated by all sorts of ghosts, fairies, witches and giants, some of whom ran off into Devonshire at once, and took to Dartmoor, where they have remained ever since. The people of Plymouth were excited, for even in those days such an event was of no ordinary occurrence. They had heard about the unpatriotic conduct of the man in the moon, and how he had quitted because of taxes; therefore they comprehended that a new piece of territory had been added to the mainland by what the town clerk called the law of compensation. The mayor happened to notice what appeared to him as a huge wall—it was really a giant's castle—so he said to one of his Vices, "If we could get over that wall we might grow corn." Town councillors and vulgar people took up his words: one cried "Corn!" another shouted "Wall!" And finally they agreed to call the new country Cornwall.

This must be true history, because it is sound folklore; and it entirely explains why the good Cornishman has ever since claimed to belong to a country whose connection with the rest of England is nothing more than a sentimental one. It also explains why the "naughty folk" of Cornwall are not British: they are a race apart, and once upon a time they all lived together at the bottom of the sea. As a matter of fact they live there at the present time; because an hundred years ago they became frightened by the alphabet, and before they had recovered properly from that shock they were stunned by the railway. Witches and fairies are not afraid of parsons and lawyers, but they cannot endure alphabets and rail-

- ways. So soon as a little girl learnt to read and write C-a-t, the fairies ran away from her. And immediately the railway came bustling through the land, giants and witches, not only retired from business, but departed altogether. Some full moon we shall stand upon the summit of Whist Tor at midnight, light our candle and whistle for our book, and then perhaps we shall explain this thing also.

CHAPTER II

JOHN CLABAR IS DISMISSED AND RED CAP APPEARS

NOBODY in the church-town of Moyle questioned the existence of ghosts and fairies during the reign of Queen Anne. If there were angels upon the scale of creation higher than mortals, then it was only reasonable to suppose there were fairies below. The curate, in his earnest fashion, insisted upon the angels, and proved their existence at least once yearly by Greek quotations from the Fathers, and Latin passages from Pagan writers, before an indifferent and slumbering congregation; the curate being far more learned than his vicar, who was a great personage, full of honours and offices, and one of Her Majesty's chaplains to boot, but he had never been to Cornwall in his life. Neither had any angels visited that neighbourhood within living memory, although visitors from the lower end of the scale were plentiful. Toby Penrice could hardly cross the fields, upon one of his courting expeditions, without running into a revel of little people; while every respectable fisherman or labourer had some tale to tell at the close of day: how he was called to the help of some fairy wench in difficulty, or had discovered some malicious little demon chopping at his nets.

There was Mother Gothall who lived in a hovel upon Poldrifty Downs; an old witch who turned flour into sand, and had ruined, according to that greater witch gossip, many a maiden who had been foolish enough to pass the hag without wearing a charm. There

were Sir Thomas Just and his Lady Manuela, both of whom had lately arrived from the East, fully qualified to practise all the higher enchantments. There was also the little attorney, Jacob Grambla, respected by everybody and feared by all. He, it was believed, had parted with his soul to the devil, and some of the more daring tongues would dwell upon the exact occasion when the transaction was completed ; that fearful night when the window of the lawyer's office shone with a horrible blue light, while laughter as fearful sounded along the single street of Moyle, so that even the curate dared not go to bed until he had fastened a pentacle upon his door-post.

No coaches passed through Moyle church-town ; nor were there any roads in the modern sense. Deep lanes afforded the only means of entering the place ; they were so steep and rough that it was a danger to descend them after dark, and so well hidden from the fields above as to be death-jumps for the fox-hunters. The inhabitants were hemmed in upon every side by moor and sea. The market-folk who came into Moyle every Saturday morning, to buy and sell and chatter, were not visitors, but parishioners who knew every yard of the way and despised its dangers. The lanes were noisy each Saturday evening, when the good folk, many of them ripe, were returning to their lonely homesteads ; and it was a pretty sight to watch their lights drifting in a long procession across the downs ; for each cart or jingle carried a great lantern and a crowbar, which was necessary to remove rocks which had fallen from the banks or sometimes to raise the vehicle when it had plunged into a fathom of mud.

Jacob Grambla was busy upon market-days. He appeared upon Moyle street, always silent and frowning, never chattering idle gossip ; but reaching one farmer after another, touching him lightly with one

finger—startling the poor fellow—and whispering, “Do ye need me, friend? Can I be of some service to you?” Many a yeoman, strong in the arm but dull in the head, resisted voice and sting for years, but yielded at last; while the commoner people went with him, not willingly, for they were afraid of the little lawyer, but, much like the children, compelled to follow the pied piper, they entered the office in the middle of Moyle church-town, and were none of them much the richer for their visit. But every man had his trouble, and each woman her difficulty; and there was nobody in their small world able to give advice and help save Jacob Grambla.

No tongue called a pleasantry to him. No hand stayed the meagre figure in dirty black suit, little shrunken wig, small-clothes unfastened at the knees, and worsted stockings creased upon the shanks. The majority were glad to see him depart from them. Yet some, who had fallen into peril of debt, would wait, and hope in a fearful fashion, for that sliding tread, thrilling finger-touch, and question of judgment, “Do ye need me, friend?”

One evening Jacob scurried up town in his shadowless way—he would spend half a day upon the downs—passed up the steps beneath the signboard “Jacob Grambla, Attorney at the law,” entered the office, which consisted of two “rooms”; a hen-coop at the back, where John Clabar sat half the day brooding, the other half copying; a rabbit-hutch in the front, where a small quaint window bellied into the street—pedestrians after dark collided with it and cursed such architecture—a kind of parchment cupboard where all manner of secrets lay in dust, where the hates of the parish thrilled and its conscience mattered; and here Jacob pulled up his stockings, scried at the cobwebs, crackled a deed, kicked at the turves on the hearth—for it was roaring March and misty—then whispered gently:

"John Clabar is there. I cannot see him, but he hears me speaking. What is he doing? What has he been doing these twenty years?"

"Thinking," a voice replied from the dark background.

"Thinking for twenty years! Then he is now a wise man, a philosopher. He should visit the book-sellers of London, and ask them what offer they make for the thoughts of twenty years. He should issue a prospectus and invite subscriptions for his printed thoughts. No, no, John Clabar. It will not do. Your thoughts are not worth one penny. I have been thinking for more than twenty years—but I think in guineas. You think in pens and pothooks. I will ask you questions, John; I will examine you. Out of the wisdom of twenty years you shall answer. What think you of me, John Clabar? What manner of man am I—not as an attorney at the law, not as a master. Am I not a charitable man?"

"I care not," replied the trembling voice.

"He cares not," said the frowning Jacob. "Yet he has sat at my elbow for twenty years. That was not wisdom answering, John Clabar. It was the truth. To care not is to think ill. Is it not true gossip will say to neighbour, 'This Grambla has sold his soul to the devil?' Do you believe I have sold my soul, John Clabar?"

"Why do you ask these questions? What matters it to me what contract you have signed? I share not in your profits," said the voice.

"Why, that is a good answer, a pretty argument. Ecce signum, John Clabar! Neither do you share the loss. If the devil comes for me, not one spell do you mutter, not an abracadabra do you whisper. No partnership, no fellowship. Is that the motto of a trusted servant?"

There came a fluttering in the coop, and out of the darkness proceeded the white-lined face of a weary

scribbler. The head was grey, for this clerk wore his own hair like all poor men, while his clothes were so black they could not be seen against that background.

"When did I swear to be your trusted servant?" asked the head.

"The dog would bite me," Jacob muttered. "Blockhead, John Clabar! Why did ye not answer me straight? No devil can claim what no man has. Souls! They be for curates. Bodies are for the world, and guineas are for bodies; and to get guineas we think; and to get guineas we scheme; and to get guineas we catch fools, John Clabar," said Jacob, his voice ending in the hoarsest whisper.

"The sands are out," Clabar muttered, one white hand indicating an hour-glass at his side, the other stealing for his hat.

"Clerk reminds preacher that the congregation wakes," sneered Jacob. "The work is over—the last pen mended—and now you would go. The sands are running out, John Clabar. I will provide you a discourse from that text, but I would not weary you. My firstly for to-day, and my secondly for to-morrow. I shall now discuss charity, that most excellent virtue, lacking which no man may prosper; but let him not forget, John Clabar, where the good thing has its beginning, or he shall walk bare-footed in the world. Twenty years you have mended my pens and copied my crabbed hand, out of charity, for I did not need you. Have I not often taken my ease in this chair, that I might afford you occupation—out of charity? And each Saturday have I not rendered you one guinea—out of charity? One thousand and forty golden guineas have passed from this hand to that. A fortune, a heap of gold, a hill of silver, a mountain of copper! How many folk in Moyle parish, or, for that matter, how many between here and Tamar, shall go to their mattress or hole in the wall, and discover there one half of a thousand and forty guineas,

to bring gladness to the eye and an honest smart to the body? Yet such a fortune I have lavished upon you, John Clabar, out of charity."

"Was there no debt?" the voice muttered.

"A debt! No, by all the angels! Would rob me of my virtue, ungrateful scoundrel? Would repay me always with a peevish face and whining tongue? Go, John Clabar! Go to your home, and thank God for it—and make much of it. My secondly you shall hear to-morrow."

Even in those days a Cornishman's to-morrow did not mean the next day. When Jacob stretched himself in bed he had a fit of shivering; he felt sick when he looked out upon a raw March morning; he perceived that the atmosphere around him was charged with witchcraft; and while drinking the small beer, and consuming the slice of pig's cheek, which the maiden Ruth placed upon his breakfast table, he muttered the names of Sir Thomas Just and Lady Manuela several times. Then he scurried from Coinage-hall, as his house was named; flitted through the lanes with the rapid but silent progress of a raven; came out upon Poldrifty Downs—more easy in mind when his face felt the wind, and the toes of his great square shoes kicked crooked stems of heather—until he drew up at the entrance to the hut where Mother Gothel lived.

"An accursed home—God bless it," the attorney mumbled, as he groped through a cloud of peat-smoke. "Mammy, my dear, appear from your hell-fumes. Jacob Grambla, attorney at the law, waits upon you with his fee. Come out and advise the adviser of Moyle parish," he called in a shrill but friendly fashion; for with all his learning Jacob had much fear of Mother Gothel.

"Aw, master, I never looked to see ye so early. You'm the first to come up to-day," said the old woman as she crept out to point downwards at the lake of mist

beneath which Moyle church-town lay submerged ; then putting up a hand to comb the greasy locks from her furrowed forehead, "I ha' slept ill to-night," she said, trying to fold her rags into some semblance of decency. "The wind was roaring, and the whist-hounds were abroad."

"You can lay 'em, Mammy. Dogs or devils, you can lay 'em deep in Dozmare Pool. Bring out a bucket of fair water, Mammy dear. There's mischief in the air. I feel it in my heart and in my bones. I want your eye to see it for me."

"Aw, master, it bain't lawful," began the old woman faintly.

"I'll tell nobody. If they drag you to the pond, I will break the lot of them. There's not a body in Cornwall who can tell the future like old Mother Gothel. Hark ye, Mammy ! Come nearer—God send this wind don't carry. Would Sir Thomas and his lady stoop to me ?"

"You talk so learned, master," the old dame protested.

"You, a witch, who can mutter the Bible backwards ! Play no games with me, or I'll crush your roof. Who is brewing this trouble for me ? Tell me that."

The old woman brought the bucket of water. The attorney flung a shilling into it ; then Mother Gothel bent, muttered a few words, and stared at the reflection of her harmless old face, and beyond it to the bright coin at the bottom.

"Do ye see nothing yet ?" cried Jacob, while the dame was searching her imagination for pictures and phrases.

"There's a black power agin ye, master," she whispered.

"Let that discover it," Jacob shouted, dropping a guinea in the water.

"A face !" muttered the old woman, her wits

sharpened by the gold. "Master, don't ye stir. A gentleman, sure enough. He bain't young, nor old neither."

"Sir Thomas!" snarled the lawyer.

"Master! 'tis wrote here in the water, 'tis wrote large; beware of money, beware of gold!" cried Mother Gothel, her imagination prospering upon suggestion. "Now the water be black—there's nought else."

"It was the face of Sir Thomas?"

"Master, it might ha' been."

"And the gold? Not the gold of the Clabars?"

"'Tis the gold of the man whose face I saw in the water."

"It is well—it is very well," said the satisfied attorney. "Sir Thomas would throw no gold at me. I shall visit you again, Mammy dear. One word before I go. You know my clerk, John Clabar?"

"Surely, master."

"He is the last of the house?"

"Master, you ha' forgot——"

"No other man?"

"His daughter—Cherry."

"Forgot!" shouted the attorney. "I never was told. Where is she hid? The wife died—died upon the straw, with the rain drip, drip upon her," he muttered.

"I mind the night well," said Mother Gothel. "'Twas warm before the big storm, but that dark you could feel it. I was abed, and heard a voice calling. Young Squire Clabar——"

"He is no squire."

"Well, master, 'twas the name they called 'en. He was but a boy—young John Clabar—as handsome a dark lad as ever danced the hay."

"He called you to his wife—and the child was born that night?"

"As fine a babe, master, as ever I handled."

"You carried her away. You made her invisible. Had you come and told me, I would have filled your stocking with guineas. Where is the brat?"

"She is twenty-one years old this day, master. She was took to Plymouth, where her mother's folks ha' lived time out of mind. A lady came for the child, and carried her away. 'Cherry of Coinagehall,' she said. 'Tis an old name of the Clabars.'"

"Cherry of Coinagehall," repeated Jacob, compelling his face to smile. "A pretty jest, Mammy. And John Clabar has deceived me these twenty years."

Jacob Grambla wore the same face for every man. It was fixed like the surface of a rock, and the changes upon it were produced by the effects of darkness and light, sunshine and storm; just as the stone might be blackened by rain or whitened by moonshine. Clabar could not tell whether the man behind that face was pleased or angry. The clerk reached the steps of the office—each worn like the stone before some wonder-working image—at nine by the church clock, and set the hour-glass running; nine times it had to run before the day's imprisonment was over. Eight times it ran before the attorney spoke:

"'Tis a pretty hand you write, John Clabar, but, mark you, there is no knowledge in round writing. 'Tis not the stroke of the t, nor the dot of the i, but the learning that matters. I write, and you copy; I speak, and you echo. A monkey or parrot might do as well, and cost but little. The quarry cliff in Bezurrel Woods will copy words in air. I may stand beside the water of the pool, and call, 'This indenture witnesseth,' and the cry is forthwith returned. That is excellent good copying, but there is no knowledge in it. If I fall into error, the voice in the air will not correct me."

"I am not here to correct errors. If a word be misspelt in your draft, it is misspelt in my copying," said Clabar.

"Then I say you are but a simulacrum with the

pen," the attorney continued. "I address the cliff, and am answered without fee; yet for your answers I must spend a golden guinea."

"Make echo your clerk," muttered Clabar, with a show of courage new to him.

"'Tis a happy thought, John Clabar. I will take pen, ink, and parchment to Bezurrel Woods, and bind the echo by indenture. See you not the trend of my argument? A dull fellow will always copy the man who is wise. Will hold his head in the like fashion, practise his gesture, ay, and imitate the very knot of his shoe-lace. You record my fault in spelling because, say you, this Grambla is wise, he has a method in his error, 'tis some trick of the law. You think well of me, John Clabar; you fear me; you imitate me. I have a daughter."

The attorney played with these words, and let each escape him slowly. He stared into the coop, sucked his lips, while his eyes were fixed upon the nodding head and the hand which trifled with a sand-box.

"Now is echo dumb," said Jacob. "Cherry of Coinagehall. A maid twenty-one years of age, dwelling, methinks, in Plymouth. A broad-faced wench, I warrant ye. Sandy complexion, hair of tow, and face of freckles."

"You have been to Mother Gothel," said Clabar quietly.

"I have kept you in my office twenty years, and now for the first time you argue conclusions from the premises."

"And now for the first time you accept an old woman's tale," the clerk replied.

"A wise woman—who would not dare deceive me."

"Who is herself deceived," said Clabar sternly.

"There is deep dealing here," said Jacob, rising and approaching the coop. "Do you not wonder, John Clabar, how 'tis the people fear me? Yet methinks there is no parishioner in Moyle so mean in

stature as myself. You are twice my bulk. You could at this moment put out your arm, take yonder shutter, and fell me to the ground. Ay, any fisher-wife in Moyle could whip me. Rise, John Clabar! Get to your home, and again I say make much of it. Turn not your insolent back upon me, but withdraw as you would proceed from the presence of the Queen—and I would have you bow as you depart. Lower, you rogue! Walk not as a free man, but slink away like a dog. A daughter named Cherry! With that fruit I will poison ye. How the fool blunders! Yet he has twice the size and strength of Jacob Grambla!"

In the dark of the night Mother Gothel came to Clabar's mean abode, where he had lived in solitude for many years, and lifted up her voice in protestation:

"Aw, Squire, dear lad, I ha' told Master Grambla about the maid, as you bid me; but trouble will come of it, I tell ye. He comes and says, 'Scry for me, Mammy'; though I knows no more about such trade than the simplest maid in Moyle. He fancies I be a witch, and if I tells 'en I bain't, he don't believe; and if I didn't do as he asks of me, he'd be the first to tie my hands and feet."

"Continue to serve him," said Clabar. "But serve me too, and if the day ever comes when Coinagehall is mine——"

"It will, Squire. I knows 'twill."

Clabar held the old woman's arm, and whispered at her ear.

"Aw, bless my dear soul and body! What be telling to me, Squire? Warn't I there? Didn't I bring the maid into the world? Didn't her coo to me? What maid had ever such a bud of a nose, and the like of they two little blossoms of eyes, and such a cherry-ripe skin wi' a dimple grown already? Don't ye be so foolish, Squire."

"She herself put it into my mind," said Clabar.

"A maid is always in danger. A maid may so easily be injured."

"Lord love ye, lad! Master Grambla will ride to Plymouth, and find out for himself. Or he'll raise the devil to tell him."

"Cherry is coming here."

"Alleluia!" cried the dame. "I don't know what it means, but I say it to Heaven, and they'll know there likely. Alleluia, Squire! 'Tis the beginning of the end, and the end be always good."

"If I do not go to her, she will come to me. I am afraid, but she insists," Clabar went on.

"When master comes to puzzle me wi' questions, I shall tell 'en I mistook," Mother Gothel answered.

The days lengthened, and primroses were budding in the lanes. It was Sunday, and Clabar, walking out to win energy from sunshine, met Toby Penrice, whom he regarded as fool and idler; for he did no work, although a man of forty, and lived upon the money his father had bequeathed to him, lodging in the house of one Caherne, a rhinder. The usual words of greeting passed, and Clabar was moving on, when Toby pushed his hat over one eye, pulled at his long hair, and asked, "Where be you agoing to live now, Master Clabar?"

"I am not shifting," replied the clerk.

"Hey, not shifting!" cried Toby. "Well, that's the funniest thing as ever I heard on."

"Who told you I was shifting?" asked Clabar.

"Master Grambla told me, and he ha' given me writing what ses I be to have your cottage this month."

"When did he give you the promise?"

"Last night."

"Very well, Toby; I see you know everything. The cottage belongs to Grambla. He may do what he wills with it."

The clerk spoke like a man at his ease, but walked on sick at heart.

It was useless to address the attorney, who chose his own moment to make announcements. Day after day passed, and it seemed as if the little man would never speak; but upon the following Saturday evening, as dusk drew on, Jacob sat upright over the ledger, balanced the great book between both hands, then closed it with a loud report.

"John Clabar, give me signs of your attention," he began, speaking more rapidly than was his wont. "You heard the closing of this volume. From to-day we part. The book is closed. I have drawn the balance. My fortune would not furnish the rake with funds for a week's carousal. Give me some signs, John Clabar."

The clerk rose and walked out into the hutch. The space was so small that the two men almost filled it.

"An honest face," the attorney muttered. "If prayers would give me such a face I would go on my knees this moment."

"You have given my home to another. You brought my father to ruin, my wife to the grave. And now——"

"I have a guinea here—your last. Insult me with lies, and I withhold it. I took you in without one word of writing; I gave you a home without one word of writing. As you came, you shall go. The tongue accepted and the tongue dismisses."

"What ill have I done?" began Clabar, but stopped; for he would not plead.

"If a guinea rolled upon the floor, you would gather it, and return it to me. If an incautious word escaped my lips, that you would not retain. You shall leave Moyle, John Clabar," said Jacob swiftly.

"Never!" cried the clerk.

"I now dismiss you. Twenty years, days in that corner, nights in my cottage, have consumed your manhood. Shame on you, John, to choose a life of

charity! Take your guinea. This day sennight quit your home—and Moyle."

"I will never, so long as I may live, dwell out of sight of my father's house. That I swear," cried Clabar loudly.

The attorney said nothing. He had turned from Clabar towards the window. As that voice rang out he fell back in a state of terror, reached for his snuff-box, and plunged into the dust two trembling fingers. The sound of the door closing behind the man, who was not again to enter that cramped corner, caused Jacob to start towards the window.

"Nothing—nothing there," he whispered.

John Clabar descended the worn steps, his head low, his shoe-laces trailing. His footsteps died away. It was nearly dark upon the street, and opposite the rushlights began to glimmer faintly. There was no rain, but the passing clouds were black. For the second time a shuffling sounded beneath the window which bellied into the street; a red-peaked cap appeared behind one of the small central panes, two fixed eyes, a wounded face. An apparition stood there, staring into the office, its nose against the glass, one shrunken finger pointing at Jacob Grambla, who had not strength to stretch his hand towards the shutter.

CHAPTER III

A COUPLE OF UNCOMMON GENTLEMEN

THE light was fading as a carriage drew up at the door of a small inn. A grave gentleman alighted, wrapped in a cloak ; his head covered with a black hat of unusual size, and not of English make. He entered, while the landlord followed, honoured by the patronage, but terrified at the presence, of Sir Thomas Just.

" Sir, you are arrived in good time, for this road after dark is a peril to man and beast. Sir, there is a mud-hole yonder which would hold a hay-wain," said the bowing and obsequious man. " Sir, permit me to bring candles—wax candles for your honour—and to offer you the best entertainment my poor house affords. Sir, had your honour sent me word by the mail of your coming, I should have been better prepared. Sir, is the fire to your liking ? These turves are not fuel for your honour ; but, alack, I had no warning. I have charcoal, and fir-logs, ay, and sea-coal also at the disposal of your honour. Sir, will it please your honour to be at ease ? "

" Bring logs, and build a cheerful fire," Sir Thomas ordered. " Weary travellers should be welcomed by a blaze which polishes the roof-beams, not by yonder handful of red ashes."

" When will it please your honour to dine ? "

" Immediately my guest arrives. Prepare dinner for two, and bedchambers also."

" Sir ! " exclaimed the troubled landlord. " There is no other house near, and the last coach has passed."

" Nevertheless, I shall not dine alone. Harkye,

landlord! Set a servant, at the door, and bid him to call me when a traveller passes with his face westward."

Producing a coin, he sent it spinning to the roof, saying, "Heads he comes this way. Tails he does not. Set your shoe upon the coin, landlord. It has fallen heads. My thousand guineas to your penny it is heads."

"Even so, your honour," stammered the worthy man, while he stared at the enchanted coin.

When the host had hurried out, Sir Thomas laughed like a boy, then murmured, "To conquer the people we must play these childish tricks. This coin is but a brass token, bought from a Roman gipsy, with a head of the goddess Fortune upon each side."

He drew a paper of the *Spectator* from the folds of his cloak, and seated himself upon an oaken settle.

The night was barely dark, for less than an hour had gone, when a voice called at the door. Another answered—less harsh but a trifle hoarse—and immediately Sir Thomas pushed his paper towards the table and crossed the room, his face wearing an expression of great kindness. The fat landlord struck his body with the opening door, and his ears with the announcement, "Sir, the young gentleman!"

"Ask him to attend me here," replied the baronet.

"Sir, he is unwilling."

Sir Thomas stepped out, calling in the voice of authority, "Stay, young gentleman! You are my guest to-night."

Taking the stranger—a strong but shrinking youth—by the hand, he drew him in, and they turned together, Sir Thomas calling, "Landlord, dinner!" before addressing the young traveller with words of welcoming reproof: "Confess that yonder moorland offers nothing to equal this glow of firelight upon the oak, and warm light of candles."

"There will soon be moonshine upon the granite,

and the gleam of the fairy moss," the young man answered.

"Good things when a man has dined."

"I have a little bread, and there is always water upon the moor."

"There are robbers upon the highway."

"They cannot rob the traveller who carries no purse."

"They may kill him before they find he has no purse. Do you carry a charm?"

"I have a good one," said the young man. "But you might curse me if you saw it."

"You do not belong to the wandering race; you go alone, and you are too fair. Young man, your fairness puzzles me. You are no Egyptian, and yet I think you have been with them."

"They are thieves and murderers. The young man who goes with them is lost. I have been with heroes who have sailed to the Indies and sunk the French in every sea—the sailors who roll between Dock and Plymouth, and are kind to man and beast. You may tell me God made braver men, but I shall not believe you."

"God might have made braver, but would not. What is your charm, young man?"

"This," said the other; and he crossed himself, then added, "Now you will let me go."

"Give me your hand," cried Sir Thomas, starting forward.

The landlord meanwhile had retired to the kitchen, where—after boxing the ears of the cook-maid for neglecting the spit—he detained his busy wife with dark sayings:

"I like not the looks of that young man. He is no honest mortal, I tell ye, Bess."

"All sorts come to an inn. His honesty don't matter to we," replied the woman.

"You don't come to my point, Bess. I say he

an't honest flesh and soul like me and you. Sir Thomas says, 'Dinner and chambers for two, landlord,' then he whistles in a manner of his own, and this young gentleman comes along the road."

"Did hear him whistle?" asked she.

"My ears were charmed," he explained. "I like not the face o' mun. 'Tis the face of body without soul. 'Tis more of a spiritual complexion than a mortal face. 'Tis a knavish face, too, I warrant."

"Sir Thomas may call all the saints and devils in Cornwall, if he do but pay the reckoning, say I. Let the young stranger be, master; for, mind ye, Sir Thomas listens to every word you'm saying," the housewife whispered.

"My dear soul!" muttered the simpleton. "Can he hear through two walls?"

"Through twenty, if he sets his mind to it. An't he a magician, and an't he been reading from his book this last hour?"

"Didn't the horseshoe drop down from the door last night?" cried the cook-maid.

"So it did—get on with thy duties, hussy!" shouted the master, "Bess, my woman, 'tis an ill night for we. Last week was born in this parish a lamb which had one head, and two bodies, and eight legs. 'Tis a warning to all men speedily to repent and to meet the Lord, who gives us these signs of his coming. And what am I but a miserable sinner? This fowl now roasting for his honour's dinner—aw, my dear, I stole mun, and that's the truth on't."

He blabbed the confession into his wife's ear lest the maid should catch it.

"You'm daft," she whispered sharply. "I reared that fowl myself."

"Ay, but I stole the egg," muttered the landlord, drawing his good lady into the passage. "The Lord will ruin me for a few bits o' shell. I won't tell ye where I found 'em."

"Master!" cried the ostler, entering at that moment from the yard. "There be a big ugly toad beside the water barrel, and her spits at me every time I goes by."

"Sir Thomas ha' brought her," cried the landlord. "Her will hop into the house, and turn into an old Jezebel at midnight. I'll tell ye, wife. I went into Farmer Trezona's yard, and picked up they eggs. The fowls yonder an't rightly ours, save by adoption. I'll carry 'em to Trezona's yard, and if they comes back here—as 'tis their nature to do—I'll accept it as a sign of forgiveness, and will steal no more. But harkye, wife, when Sir Thomas puts the fork into a bit o' breast, and gets the meat into his mouth, and has a fair proper taste o' mun, he'll know the truth—the breast be a fearful place for secrets—he'll know by his magic, and he'll call me and say, 'Landlord, how comes it this bird was born from a stolen egg?'"

A door beyond opened, and the baronet's stern voice was heard calling.

"Coming, sir, coming. Sir, dinner is ready," faltered the host. "Do ye go in, Bess. I would have you show courage. Tell him I am taken with a faintness—a shortness of breath, wife. I go to the cellar, and on Sunday, Bess—on every Sunday—we will to church."

The good man retired, while his lady went into the presence of the guests. As she entered Sir Thomas was bending at the table to snuff the candles; and being a woman of sense, when her mind was not bemused by superstition, she was struck by the kindness of his face.

"You have but little regard for the stomachs of hungry men," said the baronet reprovingly.

"Sir, dinner is coming this moment. My husband is taken with a kind of ague, and I have been attending to him."

" Bid him walk outside. The moorland air of Cornwall is your best physician. You good people spend too much of your lives between cellar and kitchen. You dwell in the country, yet you forget God made it ; and you would make for yourselves a little town in your home."

" Sir, we must stay to receive travellers. Will it please your honour to drink wine ? " asked the woman of business.

" If your ale is good, bring us a quart. If it is ill, bring us spring water. How do you answer ? "

" Sir, the ale is good, I know, for I brewed it myself ; and it is made from the spring water of which you speak."

" Then we shall drink it with a relish. Stay, my good woman ! "

The housewife turned from the door, thinking of her husband.

" I find a slight rent in my cloak. Bring me presently a needle and some thread."

" Sir, if you will permit me——"

" But I do not. This young gentleman has been to sea, and he will sail you a cockleshell against any fisherman in Cornwall. He will also repair this rent like any goodwife. For you must know the sailor handles the needle as readily as the oar. He who fights the ocean by day, and during evening sews buttons on his small-clothes, is the man for England."

Dinner was then placed upon the table, and partaken of by the guests with hearty appetite : the breast of the fowl retaining its secrets, much to the satisfaction of the host who by now was partaking of something cordial with the coachman of the baronet, and was already inclined to forget his resolution to amend. The night was calm, but the ostler, pointing to the half moon upon her back over the heights of granite, prophesied a wind from the north by midnight.

" Now, young sir," began Sir Thomas, when the cloth had been removed, the candles snuffed, and the

fire replenished, "you may feel in the mood to tell me something concerning yourself. I am particularly desirous of learning what led you to seek membership in the great and glorious Church which has been the support of my own family throughout its history. You have not acquired this savage custom, although you have been much among the sailors?" he asked, extending the long pipe he was about to fill.

"That would very likely spoil my dinner."

"I am glad of it. I like not to see a young man smoking. It is, as I have said, a savage custom, borrowed from the Indians—yet methinks soothing. Men adopt a foul habit during an age of barbarity, and cannot escape from it when they grow otherwise refined. Yet no man should use this tobacco until his beard has come. You shall instead ply the needle and repair me this rent in my cloak."

"Gladly," said the young man, putting out a firm hand for the garment, then smoothing the raw edges with cunning fingers. "Sir, I would do more than this for you," he went on warmly. "I now ask pardon for my churlish behaviour, both upon the highway, when you stopped your carriage and invited me to ride, and here, in this room, when you pressed me to be your guest."

"You did not trust me?"

"Why, sir, to speak plainly, I was afraid."

"You mistrusted my foreign appearance?"

"I did not know you, sir, and I could not guess you respected my poverty. The traveller who must go on foot is the sport of every lackey on horseback. I was not to know you wished me well, and so in a spirit of bravado I made the sign of the Cross. Ah, sir, those who are joined together by that sign may indeed trust one another."

"You speak well," murmured Sir Thomas, looking with almost painful interest at the face which was beautiful in the glow of firelight.

"I go now to join my father," the youth continued. "I have lived in the town of Dock with honest folk. They have a shop which supplies fishermen and sailors with the articles they require. I served them as apprentice."

"How did you obtain education?"

"Sir, I have but little."

"Yet you speak like one of gentle blood."

"An old dame in the same street taught me letters and figures, but could do no more. I have cried for books, sir. I would read even political pamphlets and street ballads till I had them by heart. A few of my sailor friends lent me books, and one who was—who liked me well, sir—stole a book for me. Oh, sir! it was the Bible. Had I reproved him for it, I should have been a worse sinner than himself. I did not confess—I could not have parted with the book. I have it here, in my bundle. I knew God would pardon me for accepting and keeping it, but I would rather be punished—ay, suffer many more years in Purgatory—than have missed it. Sir, when I saw that paper of the *Spectator* in your hand, I could have snatched it from you. If it is written by Mr. Addison, will you let me read it?"

"It is written by Mr. Addison, child, and to-morrow you shall have it for your own," said Sir Thomas kindly.

"Thank you, sir. Thank you. I do not know why you are so kind. I believe it is your nature that makes you so, and I know it is your religion. Now I shall tell you how I was led to the true Church. There is a Mass-room in Dock. Not many know of it, but you will know. It is in the house of an Irish gentleman."

"I have heard of it," said Sir Thomas.

"The priest, Father Daly, goes about in disguise. An Irish sailor took me to that Mass-room. I had told him I wanted a religion, and I could not find one

in the English Church. I was willing to be a Protestant, if I could find God. But I found nothing there except half-drunken parsons and snoring congregations. So I went with my friend to the Mass-room, and during that hour I seemed to be looking into heaven. Then Father Daly spoke to me, and was as kind as yourself. He asked me if I had been baptised, but I did not know. Yet I could never have been baptised by a true priest."

"Take care, young gentleman!" cried Sir Thomas.

"Do I offend you, sir?" asked the youth hurriedly.

"Nay, you are pleasing me very well. I would have you control your voice, for it appears to me yours is an emotional nature."

"Why, yes, sir," the other murmured, plying the needle with rapid dexterity.

"It is true that our religion is more favoured by those who shed tears readily," Sir Thomas continued. "The priests, I am told, convert very few men, but women listen to them gladly."

"Are not the people called Nonconformists emotional, sir—men as well as women?"

"I am told so," said Sir Thomas gravely. "This is a heresy which will grow. A wild sect—wild as the winds of England—but a dangerous. Young sir, you wonder that I stopped my carriage when I saw you upon the road?"

"I wonder no longer, now that I know the kindness of your heart."

"Yet it is not my custom to help the wanderer on his way."

"You would not wish to share your carriage with a Romany."

"I observed you in the clear light walking before me to the west," said Sir Thomas deliberately. "I noted how loosely your garments hung about you. Young man, yours is an ill tailor."

"I plead poverty, sir."

"It is a good defence ; yet you may know a better. I perceived also the movement of your arms. A man commonly swings his from the shoulders ; your hands moved only from the wrists. I saw then your shoes, although small, were too large ; you limped a trifle, therefore I knew the largeness of your shoes had caused blisters. At last I saw your face ; and I ordered the coachman to halt."

"You thought I was weary, sir ?"

"I had no thought for your weariness. I wondered at your strength, while I admired your features. You are marvellously strong, young man."

"I am strong, sir, because I have accustomed my body to much walking and rowing. Daily I have used certain exercises shown me by the sailors. I believe, sir, I can defend myself."

"Yet you are timid."

"I feel a dread of those things I cannot understand. Sir, I fear spiders."

"Yet they are easily comprehended. By what name were you received into the Church ?"

"I am called Peter."

Sir Thomas left his seat, and took his stand before the hearth. The rent in his cloak was by now repaired.

"Should it not rather have been Petronilla ?" he asked sternly.

"Why, sir ?" the young man muttered.

"Give me the cloak."

The youth held it out, rising as he did so, and saying hoarsely, "The landlady to-morrow will pass a hot iron across the stitches."

"I thank you," said the magician, bringing the work near the candlelight and examining it closely.

"Where does your father live ?" he then asked sharply.

"Moyle Church-town."

"Ah !" exclaimed Sir Thomas. "I know the village. Your father dwells there. His name is——"

"John Clabar."

"Know you any others in that parish?"

"Only by name and report, sir. I trust to find a friend for my father and myself in Sir Thomas Just, who is lord of the place; for he and his good lady are both Catholics."

"I will speak well of you; for Sir Thomas is my oldest friend, and his lady is very dear to me. Tomorrow you travel to Moyle in my carriage. I go in that direction also."

"Sir, you are heaping favours upon me."

"Have you not repaired my cloak? Are we not both of the true faith? Nay, more—come, child, your name!"

"I have told you, sir."

"Your work betrays you. Each of these fine stitches is a maiden's signature. You are wise to pass along the roads in male attire; but God made you woman, therefore nobler than a man, for a woman reigns in heaven."

"The name by which my father knows me is Cherry," she whispered.

"It grows late; I will now call for candles. May you sleep, child, as I would have your future to be."

"Will you not tell me your name? I would use it in my prayers," she said.

"At a better time and place you shall know my name," he answered.

The night was wild from midnight to the dawn; then all the roads were silent. As the travellers were about to enter the carriage, which showed darkly against the morning mist, the landlord, now restored to his easy confidence, approached Sir Thomas, hat in hand, and respectfully addressed him:

"Sir, I would wish you to remember I am an honest man. Sir, I would humbly thank you to strike your hand upon this penny, and to say what is needful, so that it may fall heads always at my bidding."

CHAPTER IV

A PECULIAR VISITOR TO COINAGEHALL

JACOB GRAMBLA hurried across his fields by a crooked pathway. Behind, Moyle lay in darkness ; Coinagehall in front was black ; above, the sky threatened. The attorney shivered and chattered as he ran ; for that pathway continued until it joined a church-way, which made it haunted ground.

"I know not why we fear these spirits," he cried aloud. "They do us no hurt ; they may not even speak till we address them. 'Tis the time of their coming—twilight, midnight, the hour before dawn. A man fears nought at midday. 'Tis the staring eye, the coldness of their presence. They steal no money—they use no knife. I fear them not, for God is merciful. He protects his children. Accursed fowls !" for an owl had screamed, and another answered. "How they freeze a man's marrow ! This is not fear—perplexity, weariness. That movement yonder in the dead fern, as of some one crawling—not fear. The law is strong. A wind from off the downs—a sailful of wind—it plays at ghost in the dead grass."

Another fearful glance behind, and he reached the porch. The house was old and much decayed ; for ivy had loosened stonework, and woodwork had known no paint for many years. It was a house which groaned and did not laugh, although it had been merry. Some of the upstairs rooms, then closed, recalled that mirth, for they were furnished after a simple fashion, and feminine trifles were still lying upon shelves : the drowsy rustling of leaves was their lullaby, the silky

silence of dust their requiem. But in the garden flowers of generations ago fought on. The Clabars had been rooted out ; yet their poppies and cornflowers—which passed through all stages of existence in one year—endured. Stone and mortar were Jacob's ; but the Clabars owned the spirit of the place.

"Ruth, my child !" called the attorney, as he shuffled along a black passage. "Is there no candle in Coinagehall ? I must procure more light. I must illumine every window. Ghost and demon—ay, and red-capped goblins flee from the light. The moon serves us ill—was made to rule the night, says preacher. The moon lights no house, save with horror ; a man will do better with his rushlight. What is the moon but a thief's lantern ? Hail, holy firelight ! "

Yet Jacob stiffened as he stood in the doorway of his kitchen, and saw in the only gleam of light between that place and Moyle the maiden he called daughter. Ruth sat, or rather crouched, in a rush-bottomed chair ; her dark hair in confusion, new colour upon her cheeks, younger life in her eyes ; with her face turned half fiercely towards the man who owned her feet and hands, but never yet had sought to win her heart. For one moment she seemed to threaten. Jacob saw that and yielded.

"Waiting, Ruth. Waiting and listening," he whispered.

Creeping forward, he sniffed in the dark corners, tested the shutters, and looked confounded.

"The man has been here," he muttered.

"Who saw him ? " she cried, springing up from the low seat. Then she glanced at the door, bit her lower lip, and turned towards the fire to hide her face.

"Death and confusion !" cried the lawyer. "An evil spirit in Coinagehall ! My house is haunted."

"An evil spirit !" Ruth repeated. "He is white in the face—trembling in every limb," she murmured, watching over her shoulder as Jacob opened the door

to listen, and to whisper every moment. "No sound—no movement. A restless spirit would not lie so quiet."

"Are you afraid?" she called.

"Nay, child, I do not fear. I have some religion, I know some spells—I will to Mother Gothel in the morning. So you would ask me questions!" he cried with a grin. "You would examine me—browbeat me, I doubt not. Light another candle—light many—and set them in the corners. Only the wicked love to sit in darkness. Why did you watch this door?"

"I heard your footsteps."

"You were never wont to watch for me. What brings this colour to your cheeks, this gladness into your eyes? Are you in league with the devil and his angels? Your mother, I believe, was no better than a witch." He stopped with a frown, always glancing from door to window, and shrinking at every movement of the wind. Never before had he mentioned to Ruth the name of mother.

"Ah! speak to me of her. Tell me of my mother," the girl prayed.

"The devil take you!" Jacob shouted, glad of the courage in his voice. "You would ask questions. You would command. Go to the pot and bring me supper—and keep that tongue from everlasting chatter."

"May I not know my mother?" she cried.

"Curse you, wench! Would you surround me with spirits of the dead?"

"She is dead! Ah well, the saddest dreams are true. I will serve you, Mr. Grambla," she whispered, and turned towards the hearth, seeing the flames leaping through a mist of tears.

"Do you no longer call me father?" demanded the attorney.

"'Tis a holy name, and you give me no right to use it."

"Upon this night you defy me. Why upon this night do you refuse to call me father?"

"Upon this night I feel a woman," came Ruth's clear answer. "The greatest happiness of woman is to love. So much is it the greatest happiness that even to minister to a worthy man is a joy to her; because, if that is not love, it is at least love's counterfeit."

"Where did you come by learning?" asked Jacob mockingly.

"I was born with what little I possess."

"A man brings nothing into the world," he muttered. "A woman brings *malhecho*. That word was your mother's—she had Spanish blood. Her grandfather was cast upon the rocks while flying from Drake's pinnacle *Minion*—you see, I have some history—even as you shall be, if you defy me. Enough of this," he cried angrily. "I am not your father, but your master. I would you had fallen as a child and bitten out your tongue."

Ruth said no more, but busied herself by preparing the humble meal; yet the high colour remained on her cheeks, and her eyes were bright. She was discovering her woman's strength. Jacob sat huddled in his chair, its straight back towering high above his head; while a clock wheezed and ticked heavily behind, and the night wind sighed. His head jerked, his hands twitched. He shuddered again and began to prowl the kitchen, tapping the woodwork with his cane. Terror, which made him restless, forced the question from him, "At what hour did this evil spirit enter my house?"

"Not long before sunset," Ruth replied.

"Was he wearing the red cap?"

Faintly she answered, "Yes."

"So he has terrified you. That is good. You also feel it. Had he a wounded face?"

"I did not note it."

"He has a running wound beneath the cap," said the attorney with a convulsion of his whole body.

"He can put it on and off at will. The face is ghastly—dead flesh with living eyes Did he speak?"

"He said he had escaped," she faltered

"From the grave—from hell," cried Jacob wildly.

"What did he say of me?"

"He made no mention of you."

"Did he not say what was his business here?"

"I believe he had come here by chance."

"You fool! No spirit acts without design. He came to Coinagehall that he might stamp his accursed image upon the rooms and passages. How long did he remain?"

"I know not—I was amazed," said Ruth.

"Did see him withdraw?"

"One instant he stood there," said Ruth boldly, yet with a certain cunning, as she pointed at the doorway. "Then he was gone."

"Ay, 'tis the way of them," muttered the haunted man. "They come like wind at the lattice, and as suddenly depart. So you addressed him—'tis true you have some courage. How did he answer?"

"He said this was surely a very ancient house. A good place for a man who would hide away from the world," Ruth answered with secret joy.

"Did he promise to return?"

"I did not hear him. He confessed it was a house much to his liking."

The attorney groaned and came towards the hearth, pushing his dry hands near the flames. "The spirit of a Clabar," he muttered. "Listen, girl!" he cried, snatching at Ruth's arm. "Last evening, while I stood beside the window of my office—John Clabar having departed—this foul creature stood before me, its ghastly countenance against the glass. John Clabar is a rogue, child. Mark that well! A base fellow, and perchance a wizard. He knows too many books, he thinks too deeply—he plans to ruin me. I did my duty by discharging him. This evening was

wild in Moyle. The sun went down in a whirlwind—a wind of enchantment, I warrant—and again I looked out, and the evil one was there. Presently he departed, and with him went the wind. Others have seen him—Caherne the rhinder, Gweek the fisherman—he made mouths at them, and they went home sweating. He is but five feet in height, wears a blood-red cap, black clothing—his neck scaly like a fish, and the face all dead—a fearful sight! I have no stomach for my supper. To-night I fear—to-night . . .” His voice faded away into gasps of terror. Shuffling again to the door, he opened it and listened.

“Do you believe this is John Clabar’s work?” asked Ruth composedly.

“I fear Sir Thomas has a kindness for the rogue. If he has whispered to John Clabar, if he has taught the villain from his books of Eastern magic . . .”

Again his voice failed, and it was left to Ruth to add, “Then you are ruined.”

“Will ye be silent, wench!” cried Jacob wildly. “Taunt me no more; or, by the soul of your witch-mother, I will whip you soundly.”

It so happened that a great calm prevailed outside: not a leaf of ivy was in motion, not a twig tapped the windows. Jacob’s custom was to retire after supper to his bedroom adjoining the kitchen, with a quart of small ale; and he would pace the floor, weaving his plots and muttering his plans, for half the night. At the usual time he crept away without a word.

Ruth heard the door close—then a sound of scuffling, a scream which made her tremble; and Jacob stumbled back with livid face. A breath of cold air came with him.

“He has entered by the window—lain upon my bed! Hides now behind the clothes-press!” he whispered as if choking.

“Ah, heavens! I had forgot to close the window,” murmured Ruth, wringing her hands in sore distress.

"I'll go there no more," gasped Jacob. "Nay, but the box beneath my bed—filled with papers, my mortgages, my assignments, the deed of Coinagehall, the ruin of the Clabars. Ruth, I will be a father to ye—will find ye a rich husband, a man who fears God even as I—will send you to fair with a golden guinea. Drive away the evil one, I implore ye. A text of Scripture—I have forgot. Go with your fingers crossed. Drive him forth in the holy name. My conveyances, my parchments, and my guineas!"

"There is no man," said Ruth calmly, though she trembled. "If you dare not return alone, walk behind me. I fear no window open to the night." Then, as if struck by some memory, she fled from the kitchen, bearing a lighted candle, and ran to the lawyer's room.

The bed-curtains were drawn back. Some man had lately been lying there; for the impression of his body, and imprint of his head, were deeply made.

"It is true," she called in a troubled voice. "The man has been here."

"My box!" cried Jacob.

"Safe and untouched. He went away, as I told you, hours ago."

"Ay, but he will return," the attorney muttered, as he dared to approach the room. "Why did you not tell me he entered by this window and spread himself upon my bed?"

"I had forgot."

"He laid upon my bed to curse my slumbers—give me foul dreams. I'll lie here no more. Carry my box into your chamber. I will lie there. You fear no evil. Come you into here and sleep."

"Gladly," said Ruth. "But I cannot lift the box unless you aid me."

Until the sky was grey Jacob sat, surrounded by candlelight; and he made no plots. With the coming of day he slept, but cried out horribly, for Red Cap was master of his slumbers. When Ruth knocked

he rose and, having flung on his clothes, came briskly to the kitchen, a strong man armed by sunshine.

"I go to Mother Gothel for a spell. With it I shall lay this evil creature," said he in the voice of confidence. "When the wicked dies, the spirit must wander, seeking some strong and learned man who may give him rest; not parson, mind ye, nor yet whining clerk; but the man of the law, the headman, he who guards the secrets of the people. I'll do it, I warrant. I'll lay this Red Cap beneath the biggest rock upon the top of Great Gwentor."

Taking hat and cane, and drawing a cloak about him—for the little man was careful of his health—Jacob made briskly for the outer door, which Ruth had left open, the morning being bright, the air soft. One step from the threshold Jacob turned. Sunlight, streaming into the house and falling upon part of the unused stairway, showed him footprints dimly outlined by the dust.

Jacob advanced to the foot of the stairs and summoned Ruth. She came, and he stepped aside, admitting the sun as evidence.

"Who has ascended my stairs?" he asked.

"I went up to open a window, where I sit and look out upon the fields," she answered.

"I perceive also the footprints of larger shoes."

"May not the man have gone that way?"

"Some mystery is here," said the attorney firmly. "You have not told me all. Did this vile monster come alone?"

"I saw no more than one."

"Did see him climb the stairs?"

"I told you I was amazed."

"During the night I heard movements, as of some creature passing from room to room."

"I heard the noise of rats, and the scuffling of owls."

"I shall ascend," said Jacob, mounting the first stair fearfully.

"Take care!" cried Ruth.

"What mean you? There was terror in that cry," he muttered.

"The rooms are dark."

"Then you shall pass up before me, and throw back the shutters."

"I dare not," she murmured.

"I thought you had no fear," he scoffed.

"I fear this Red Cap. If he placed a hand upon me I should die with terror."

"Think you he waits in hiding? I would not trouble him," said Jacob, shrinking against the panels of the wall.

"Go up!" she cried sharply. "Go up, if you dare, and discover for yourself."

She stepped back into shadow, her bosom heaving, her hands shaking pitifully. Jacob faltered, and when she put a hand across her eyes his knees failed so that he almost fell upon the stairs.

"Nay, I have no spell. I am not armed against the devil," he cried. "To-morrow I shall be prepared. I will be master of my house."

Ruth remained in the silent hall, some time after Jacob had departed, leaning against the blackened woodwork with her eyes closed; until the emotion, and her thoughts of vengeance, passed, and the sunshine became pure again. Then she moved like one aroused from sleep.

"Thank God he did not go up," she whispered. "Had he done so—would they have spared me?"

Still trembling, she passed into the garden. It was a happy day of resurrection for trees and plants, of new life for bees, and release for butterflies. The breeze came balmy from the sea, scented from the woodlands of Bezurrel, like sweet wine from Gwentor. Ruth put back her face to kiss a sunbeam, and, as her whole body thrilled, she threw out her hands, crying the one word: "Spring!"

CHAPTER V

JACOB HEARS GOOD TIDINGS

By seeing ghosts men may win honour in their own community. Caherne the rhinder and Gweek the fisherman, humble parishioners, became in a night elevated into local demagogues; a position which, not knowing how to use, they abused by a wildness of speech and a staggering gait; for the temptation to crack a bottle with ghost-seers was not to be resisted by the soberest. Even the curate neglected to consider the hard problem of providing food and clothing for a wife and eight children upon a stipend of less than a guinea weekly, in order that he might visit each celebrity with breathless questions; receiving such answers as were suggested by memory, added to imagination, and confirmed by liquor.

Curate. "It is reported that an apparition has been seen by you near the office of Mr. Grambla. As the visit of this unhappy spirit is a great matter to the parish, and may indeed precede some dire calamity, it is my duty to obtain from your lips a statement as to time and place, together with a full description, so that I may prepare a particular account of this portent for the information of the Vicar, and the confusion of those persons who in their folly deny the resurrection of the dead."

Caherne. "I saw mun sure enough. Was outside the window at Master Grambla's, and he stared and stood, and I could see the wall through the body and clothes of mun. Was no higher than a pony—four feet, I reckon—and when he walked he never touched

ground, save 'twas a bump here and there, as it might be a stone jumping down hill. And he wore a hat, bloody red 'twas—lawyer says 'twas a cap, but I swear to the papist hat—husband o' the scarlet woman he be, parson. Never made a sound what I could hear. Got littler and littler till he warn't no more than a dot ; what jumped about as 'twas a fly, and went out sudden like."

Gweek. "I saw mun going down Moyle town, towards churchyard, just after the sun went, and the air was misty like. He looked solid then, and the same as living folk. He was small at first, no bigger than a little child, but he got bigger and taller while he went along, till he got such a monstrous size I couldn't see nought else for ghost. And he moved heavy, and dragged himself along so slow he seemed in mortal pain ; and as he went he breathed out fire and smoke, that I went faint to see mun. He wore red clothes and a little yellow cap—yellow I knows 'twas, a sort o' sandy yellow—and he made fearful noises—bellowed like a bull 'a did—but I heard no talk what I could sense. He got bigger, till his head went right into a monstrous great black cloud along the tucking field, and he went on blowing fire, and roaring, and he reached out a great foot as though to kick me off the land, and I fell on my knees, that faint and trembling, and I knew no more. And God's my witness, parson, that's the truth."

The curate's knowledge of Greek, Latin, and the Fathers assisted him not at all to reconcile these statements. Parishioners in general accepted the story which each individual fancy had evolved after hearing the versions of Caherne and Gweek. Nobody could swear to a personal adventure with a spirit ; yet all knew others who had been affrighted by some visitation.

When Jacob Grambla beheld a knot of gossips assembled upon the street, cunning mind conquered trembling body. "'Tis an ill day for master when

servants find him whipped," said the mind. Then he joined the people, giving each one a welcome, and inquired if anything was amiss.

"The ghost, master! The ghost!" cried several voices.

"For shame, neighbours! Shame upon ye to stand idle when the sun calls ye to the fields," cried Jacob.

"Seek for ghost upon All Hallows. Tell of them on Christmas Eve. What is a ghost, neighbours? A phantom of the dead, as ye know; and the dead are more in number than the sand of the shore. If it be true they watch over us, then are we visible to them. Why then should they not appear before our eyes? The man who sees a ghost may call himself happy, for part of the mystery of heaven is revealed to him."

"The man's an angel when he gets to heaven, master. A ghost, I warrant, is nearer to the devil," said an old man shrewdly.

"I'll hear no blasphemy," said Jacob sharply. "The man who sees a phantom receives a blessing. A ghost comes to warn us our time is short—there's a blessing! He comes to assure us of a future state—there's a blessing! And he comes to seek a blessing for himself. This Red Cap, neighbours——"

"Did ye speak with him, master?"

"Ay, I showed him no fear; for when a man, mark you, shows terror for a phantom, his heart is not right—he does not love his fellow-creatures. I put my head out from the window, and inquired his name and business. He did not tell his name; perchance he has forgot it. He groaned, neighbours, and said he found no rest; for he had been murdered, and the man who killed him lives unpunished—in this parish and church-town of Moyle."

A murmuring went up from his listeners, who by now occupied the whole width of the street.

"Neighbours," continued the triumphant Jacob, "to whom should this poor spirit come but to the attorney at the law of Moyle?"

"There ha' never been seen the like o' mun in town or country," cried the old man who knew history.

"He was a sailor, wrecked and cast ashore; and his belt was well lined with guineas. His murderer cast the body back to sea, and 'twas beaten to shreds against the rocks. Get you to your duties, neighbours," cried the attorney with a wave of the hand. "And forget not to pray that the parish be not cursed for one man's sin."

"Who is the man?" cried some; but many were silent, for they had memories of wild nights and wrecking.

"Nay, friends, am I not a man of Moyle, a parishioner, and one of yourselves?" Jacob answered with a smile; winning the innocent by his loyalty, and the guilty by his silence. "I guard the secret until this man turns against me. He is not Caherne, nor yet Gweek. I know the murderer well, I see him each day—he is not among you now. He is, I doubt, a worthless fellow. I go now to the labours of the day—and you have yours."

But none came upon business that morning, although the curate came for profit; being minded to write a volume dealing with Cornish apparitions, which were numerous, and to carry the manuscript to booksellers of London; and the curate had a tedious length of sentence. After his departure Jacob stepped out, for the street by now was empty, locked his door, then went by the stony track ascending Poldrifty and leading to the hovel of the witch.

"You'm haunted," said Mother Gothel with a chuckle, which the attorney attributed to professional satisfaction of having a case in hand. "I ha' heard the tale. What Moyle be telling I know. And I know what Moyle don't. I see whist things up here, master—I see little folk and black dogs, and brindled cats wi' tails like trees. As for ghostes, I take no notice o' they 'cept to brush 'em off. They'm often thick as

flies. You won't get away from Red Cap, master. Bless ye! I knows old Red Cap. One of the artfullest, he be."

"Give me a spell, Mammy. Tell me how to lay him," implored Jacob, cunning man of the world no longer.

"I'll do the best I can, master; but Red Cap ain't one of the ordinary. He be what us calls one of the Devil's Beauties. He won't go for my spells, nor for your textes neither. Takes a learned man to lay he—one from Oxford, master, who knows the black-letter; or one from the East. A black gentleman from Arabia would lay him, I warrant, and send him to the Red Sea for ever and ever. Sir Thomas would lay Red Cap in his snuff-box, and take no time over it neither; but he's a mighty magician, while I be nought but a poor witch body."

"He has been to Coinagehall—lain upon my bed—ascended my stairs. I dare not sleep in my own house."

"Red Cap be a fearful lad, master. I knows 'en well. I can't do nought save give you a brew to set upon the doorstep. If he drinks my broth, he'll have to go, whether he wants to or no. I'll give ye a magic bottle to set aside the brew; for when he ha' drunk, he must go into the first thing handy, and that will be my bottle. Then you must cork 'en in tight, and bring me the bottle wi' the old lad inside mun. But harkye, master! Do ye know what Red Cap wants with ye? Have ye spoke to the old lad?"

"The sight of him dries my tongue. Would you have me speak to him?"

"Surely, master. How do us know he ain't been sent to tell ye something good?" whispered the old woman in an artful fashion.

"By heaven! I never thought of that," cried Jacob.

"You speak to 'en, master. There be as many different sorts o' ghostes as there be o' folkse. Some be good, and some be bad. One lot o' ghostes tries to hurt a man, and another lot does their best to help

him. When I hear the tale I says to myself, 'This may be a mighty bit o' luck for master.' "

"Go on, Mammy dear. Go on!" gasped the lawyer.

"This Red Cap, master, be wonderful well known to us quality witches. He'm a mischievous lad sometimes, and terrible hard to shake off, but he ain't always naughty. He'm like mortals, wi' virtues as well as vices. He be one o' the sort we know as money ghostes."

"Get to the end, Mammy. A money ghost! You said money?"

"Us knows 'en by the red cap," continued Mother Gothel. "That be the sure sign of a money ghost. They comes to poor gentlemen, what be worthy, and tells 'em of gold hidden in some place, of treasure in the ground——"

"Heaven and hell!" broke in the lawyer wildly. "You would fool me—nay, you dare not. Say the words again, my beautiful Mammy—gold hidden in some place! You know everything. You know I am poor and—before God—honest. Treasure in the ground! I'll build you a house, buy you a silk gown. May Red Cap come to-night! I'll speak to him. I want no brew to drive away good angels. I shall swallow a bumper of brandy, and so win courage. Gold in the ground! I would dig up Poldrifty Downs to find it."

Mother Gothel sat at the door of her miserable home and laughed; while Jacob scurried down the trackway between golden furze-bushes which smelt to him of guineas.

"Aw, run, my tawny-faced one, to thy ruin!" she chuckled. "You come to me, learned man of Moyle, to the wise woman who knows not the letters of the alphabet. A ghost is an evil conscience, Jacob Grambla. Eh, eh! the lone old woman body with a beard must take to witchery for a living. I warrant my tawny-faced one would be running t'other way, had any one told 'en how I love the Clabars—had any one told 'en Sir Thomas Just was with me yesterday."

CHAPTER VI

CHERRY COMES TO HER FATHER'S COTTAGE

JOHN CLABAR arose at the usual time, but his mind was not fully awake, and he started when sounds came up from the living-room. A bitter taste of dreams remained, making new happiness short of memory. The scene was poverty; before him lay homelessness; behind lurked the savage shape of the attorney. Yet the sunshine, and that glad voice singing!

He opened the door and called, "Cherry!"

"Father!" came the answer.

"I have been starved," Clabar murmured. "That one word feeds me—the name I have never heard before though I grow old." Then he called, "I bade you lie until I came to you."

"Thoughts would not let me stay abed—nor would my duty. When was a woman last in here?"

The man could not answer; for her mother had been the last to keep his home tidy, and she had died before many of the oaks around had burst from acorns. He dressed, descended the few stairs, and held out his arms with the cry, "Cherry, my child!"

They embraced and were tender to each other. Had Toby Penrice been at his game of spying, he must have ridiculed, supposing he had seen two men in love; for there was little of the woman about Cherry save her heart.

"Child!" she cried merrily. "A child far broader than yourself. A child who could sling you upon her

back and carry you a mile. A child who will knock down your enemies. There's a child indeed ! ”

“ A fond and foolish word,” said Clabar. “ I must now accustom my tongue to another.”

“ Peter, sir,” said she with a bow. “ Peter, the sailor lad, who can use hands or feet against any man in Moyle. Who can carry a sack of corn to the top of Gwentor, sir. Who can sweep a room and bake bread, sir. Who can fan himself, and patch his face, and prove a mighty fine lady too, sir. Young Peter, who is proud of his name and father, who has sworn, moreover, by the Mass to whip the scoundrel Grambla, with his sister Cherry—twins in one body—salute you, sir.”

“ This will not do,” said Clabar seriously. “ I call you Cherry no longer. 'Twas your mother's name for her unborn child. June it was when we declared our passion in an orchard. Cherries were hanging from the trees, and to these she pointed, saying, ‘ Is not the love of two hearts like berries on one stem—two bodies joined together in one growth ? ’ And in the dark hour following your birth she whispered, ‘ This is my fruit—my Cherry—and it kills the tree.’ The name of Peter does not fit my tongue.”

“ If you cannot regard me as son,” she said ; then laughed and added, “ I have no other clothes.”

“ The plot is fixed,” said Clabar. “ It is known I have received my son. Our enemy cannot learn the truth, for only Mother Gothel was present at your birth, and she is true to us ; nor were you christened here. We are the last of the Clabars, the only flaw in Grambla's title to our home. He fears no woman, however strong. He knows of a hundred ways to ruin women ; but a man may withstand his bitter heart and lying tongue. A maid must be always weak because her honour is open to attack ; even upon slight suspicion both Church and law will torture her—force her to end her life, or drive

her from the place. But a man, it seems, may rise in the good opinion of his fellows by offending. A man causes a maid to stumble—that is gallantry. The maiden tempts a man, and that's a crime."

"Can you find anything of the maiden here? Do you not behold a pretty fellow?"

"Your golden curls, and a certain way of speaking——"

"If I am betrayed my head will do it. But I can speak as hoarsely as a drunkard. I passed among the sailors of Dock, and none suspected me—and saucy chambermaids would kiss their hands to me. Had I told them I was a maid, none would have believed me because of my strength. Beauty is good, but strength is far better. Yesterday there was one man of Moyle, to-day there are two."

With this proud boast she went on sweeping; but Clabar chided her, for it seemed to him she meant to clean the cot too thoroughly; and indeed the work was needed. Twenty years of a man's housekeeping had proved the Saturnian age for mice and spiders.

"Presently I shall tell you my reason. First let us breakfast," said he in a somewhat respectful manner.

Taking a brown jug from the dresser, Clabar was making for the lean-to where stood the cask of ale, when Cherry called him back and invited him to consider a pan of water near boiling on the hearth.

"What would you do with hot water?" asked the puzzled man.

"This packet," she said, "was given me by a sailor who had been round the world. He gave one half to his mother, and the other to me, because I had taught him the letters—as Cherry. He would not have bestowed the gift on Peter. It is the Chinese leaf which people of quality now drink in the morning."

"Is it not what they call tea?" asked Clabar, sniffing at the contents of the packet.

"Yes, and 'tis worth its weight in gold."

"Lady Just uses the leaf largely, I am told. Sir Thomas has a liking for the herb or plant—I know not how they call it—the potato, which is much used in other parts of the country, and is said to taste very well with meat."

"Have you no potatoes in Moyle?" she cried. "In Dock and Plymouth the poorest eat them, and they are to be bought very cheap."

"They are not used in Cornwall. Sir Thomas has brought great unpopularity upon himself by urging the folk to plant them. This potato, 'tis said, is a form of the woody nightshade, and therefore poisonous."

"Pish!" she laughed. "Any new thing is a gift of the devil. And now, father, taste the brew, while I broil these herrings."

Clabar sipped at the tea with a wry countenance, then shook his head in condemnation.

"Nay, give me ale," he said. "This is bitter stuff. I would as soon drink medicine."

"Some mix sugar with it," she explained.

"Sour or sweet, I'll have no more of it," said Clabar, reaching for the jug. "'Tis good liquor, I doubt not, to the heathen Chinaman, but the Englishman must have his beer. Good ale is the only drink for sober people. This tea, I fear me, is but another of the Eastern vices—a new fashion in drunkenness—in favour therefore with our wealthy dames, who cannot be aroused to the pleasures of the day without some cordial. Nay, Cherry, honest countryfolk will never be brought to drink such stuff, did you give it them free. Cast it from the window, and let us start the day in English fashion."

They seated themselves to breakfast, and Cherry began at once to talk of Coinagehall and the times of her grandparents; but Clabar checked her with the utterance, "We have each a history of twenty years to tell and hear."

"Mine is half twenty," replied Cherry.

Yet her record was by far the longest, for the daughter had done more in one month than her father in a year. Cherry spoke of adventures by land and sea, of fighting and free ways of living, more like a young roisterer of the town than a modest maiden; but through all her narrative was sounded the two clear notes of the struggle to educate her mind and her devotion for the Catholic religion. While Clabar had only to tell of days in the lawyer's office, and years of lonely nights, with such matters of family history as he thought the girl should know.

"I am sorry you are papist," he said at length. "Yet I know not. Sir Thomas may on that account show you some kindness."

"What manner of gentleman is he?" she asked with much anxiety.

"A mystic," said Clabar, lowering his voice.

"A magician?"

"A wonderful enchanter. 'Tis true he is English, though to us he more nearly resembles an Eastern sage. He has dwelt in the East—I know not where—acquiring the magic of the country. Upon succeeding to the title he came here, it being his father's wish that he should occupy Bezurrel. His lady has no liking for the place."

"Is she English?"

"There is nothing of England in her except pride. 'Tis said she is of gipsy blood. She has beauty, but no kindness. Sir Thomas and his lady are alike; both stern and cold. They tell the future from the stars, call up storms, hold converse with the dead. The old baronet was confined at the last, and died like a beast which has no understanding. The son may end likewise."

"Father, are not these stories told because Sir Thomas is a papist?"

"I cannot tell," said Clabar. "Bezurrel is a house of secrets, and not one leaks out, for the servants are

foreigners who despise our people and will not speak to them ; nor will they answer if addressed. The castle doors are closed to all."

"The Mass is still black magic to the people. They would rather choose no religion than the true one. Is Sir Thomas rich ?"

"One of the wealthiest in the kingdom."

"Is there no family ?"

"Two sons—David and Martin. They attend the University of Oxford."

"Are they magicians also ?"

"I know little of them ; but have seen both passing through Moyle with their dogs and horses. They are dark young men, and proud like their father. But what is the family of Just to us, that we should sit here and discuss them ?"

"I like the name ; it has a pleasant sound," said Cherry. "And I do not forget how my kind friend of the inn promised to speak well of me before Sir Thomas. Now for the present ! Which shall be my first labour ? Give me the choice, and 'twill be the whipping of old Grambla from Moyle street to Coinagehall."

"Cherry, I pray you do not threaten—lay not a finger upon the man," implored her father. "He may set a spy upon us. Even now some creature of his may listen at the door. An hour ago I forbade you to clean this cottage. It belongs to Grambla. I have occupied it in loneliness—and next week we leave it. This roof at least gives shelter. A few days, and we shall look upward at the clouds."

"Would you waste sorrow on these rotten timbers ?" asked Cherry.

"Do you not perceive, child, we shall soon be homeless ?"

"There's many a worse fate than sleeping in the air. The homeless folk are often the most happy, and always the most free. Spring is coming in. We will away to the woods ! We shall be merry—that is

needful. My breeches have pockets large enough, but they are empty. My head is full. If strength were guineas we might live in ease."

"I have saved a guinea every month," said Clabar.

"Twenty times twelve guineas!" cried Cherry with vast excitement. "Here is wealth with freedom! But where is all this money?"

"Beneath the flooring of my bedroom."

"It must out from there. I may not know Grambla, but I have some knowledge of his nature. He will suppose you have saved, for he knows how meanly you have lived. He may rob you while we are abroad. Listen, father! Presently we go out, and I shall make a parcel of your guineas and carry them until we find a home. To-morrow I wait upon Sir Thomas, and you attend me."

"Nay, child," cried Clabar. "Sir Thomas has never taken notice of me."

"He shall take notice of your daughter, yet remain unconscious of the honour while welcoming your son."

"Neither man nor woman of Moyle church-town is welcomed to Bezurrel."

"Precedent is against us; therefore we banish precedent. To be repulsed will not harm us."

"I have some pride remaining. The fields of Coinagehall reach to Bezurrel Woods. The yeomen Clabars were friends once of the titled Justs. I will not go."

"Father," said the young athlete calmly. "You shall go."

The man would have wasted more breath in his resistance, had not the sound of voices filled the room. He advanced to the window, and soon two parties of parishioners came along, shouting at each other. Clabar listened to the high-pitched dialect, while amazement grew upon his face. Then he said to his daughter, "Since Grambla dismissed me from his

service I have not left this house ; and now there has something happened I must hear of."

He passed out into the street and called the men, who thereupon gathered round him, each eager to tell his tale and make it long ; so that many minutes passed before Clabar rejoined his daughter to add his wondering words towards the ghostly snowball :

" A phantom has appeared in Moyle—a most fearful apparition ! It has been seen in the churchyard, at Coinagehall, within Grambla's office. It has passed along the street of Moyle, driving the folk into their houses by breathing fire upon their faces. It has announced a great pestilence—an invasion of the French—I know not what. It has denounced at least a dozen men by name for thieves and murderers ; and has sworn to haunt this place till the villains are all hanged. Two men, it is said, have been already deprived of reason ; one woman, touched by the creature, now lies at death's door. It wears a yellow robe—the sign of pestilence ; and spotted with blood—a token of war. It walks at twilight."

" A ghost ! " cried Cherry. " Well, I would behold a creature so much talked of, but so seldom seen."

" This is surely the work of Sir Thomas and his lady."

" Why must they terrify the inhabitants ? "

" They who practise the black art must abide by the consequences," said Clabar solemnly. " The prophets of old were holy, yet they foretold nothing but evil. Sir Thomas and his lady summon spirits from the dead ; but they may not bring the souls of the righteous back to earth. The wicked alone may answer to their call."

" Father," she said, " you were never brought up to the ways of the counting-house."

" What is your meaning ? " he asked impatiently.

" The man of business keeps a book, in which he places upon one side the money he receives, and upon

the other what sums he pays out. But the money he receives is not altogether profit, for he must deduct the sums he pays out ; and when he has done that he may find no profit remaining. When you are told a strange story, you shall place upon one side all that your reason accepts, and upon the other what it rejects ; and by deducting one from the other you eliminate details and obtain the truth. And if there should be no remainder, you may know the whole story to be false. A ghost has been seen in Moyle. Well, that is possible : reason accepts a ghost. It has appeared in the churchyard, which is indeed a likely place ; also at Coinagehall and within Grambla's office. If a ghost be seen in one place, imagination will cause it to appear in twenty places. We may however write down Coinagehall and Grambla's office upon the credit side of reason ; for these two places have a clear connection. The rest we may debit. A sailor who has gone round the world cannot tell his story without detail ; neither will the countryman who has seen a ghost. The story may be true, but not the details ; for the story proceeds from his memory, and the details from his fancy."

"You confound me with your learning," Clabar muttered, rubbing his simple head.

"Ah, father, a town life sharpens wit. I do not see the hand of Sir Thomas here, but I can suspect the cunning mind of Grambla. If a man can raise spirits, which I believe is possible, who could do it better than a vile attorney ? He knows of my coming. He therefore invokes the aid of the devil against me. One thing he does not know," she continued, producing a small crucifix. "I am safe from every power of evil, by day, by twilight, and by night."

"There may be truth in what you say," Clabar admitted. "Yet I have doubts. No man is more terrified by the night than Grambla ; I have walked behind, and heard him scream like a woman when a

bramble has caught his cloak. I will learn more of this matter. Mother Gothel will inform me ; and she will be here to-day, for she longs to see you. If Grambla be haunted by this apparition, he will not rest till he has gone to her. If he has raised this spirit he does not need her. Thus we shall know."

"Let's talk of graves no longer. We are for long life and happiness !" cried Cherry. "Take me to your room, and produce this hoard of guineas ; for I would count them to make sure none be missing. See, father, the day is glorious ! We will walk together—to Coinagehall."

"You are beside yourself, child," said Clabar sharply. "Should we be seen trespassing upon the land stolen by Grambla from my father——"

"But we shall not be seen. Where all men fear to tread, the trespasser is safe. Grambla sits in his lair spinning conveyances. His only servant is the poor maid Ruth. Should she spy John Clabar and his daughter—then, by my soul, John Clabar's son shall kneel before her."

"You preach the gospel of courage, which I had come near forgetting," said Clabar, striving to lift and straighten his bowed shoulders. "I follow you to my father's house, my golden Cherry."

"Plain Peter," she corrected, pinching his arm lightly. "The sailor lad from Devon side of Tamar. You find no cherries in the month of March. Call Peter," she whispered, "and he shall answer with a daughter's love."

They were upstairs, warming their bodies beside a heap of dingy guineas, when a great knocking fell upon the door. Cherry covered and concealed the treasure ; her father hurried to the lattice window ; while the pounding of fists upon the door went on.

"'Tis Mother Gothel," cried Clabar, much relieved. "I feared it might be some officer of justice and the law."

"There you are wrong," said Cherry. "For law is to justice as darkness is to light. When I have counted and secured these guineas I will come down to you," she called as he departed.

"Where's the maid?" cried Mother Gothel, while the door was yet opening. "Where's the little cherry-ripe lady I brought into this sinful world, and dangled in my arms—do ye mind that night, John Clabar Squire; the wind and the rain, and the lanterns on the cliff? Shut the door close, do ye. I be afeard o' Master Grambla and his ways. I come across the fields. Aw, my dear gentleman, bring me a cup of ale. I was stugged to the knees in mire, and I be choked wi' March dust—a good thing, they says, but bad to stomach—and my old heart be to the gallop like a runaway horse. Where be my dear maid? They calls me a witch, Squire Clabar. They says I ride over Poldrifty Downs across a bit o' crooked furze stick. Stars o' heaven, I'd like to sense that trade. I wouldn't walk to Moyle if I could fly. Draw the worst ale, Squire dear. I be so dry wi' dust I ha' no taste."

"I am glad you are come, Mother," said Clabar, returning with the ale. "I have a question to ask about the ghost."

"Ah, ah!" gasped the old woman as she drank. "I'll talk no ghostes nor yet Gramblas. I'll say nought till I ha' seen the maid. I brought her into the world, mind ye. Her would never ha' lived without the old witch body. But I warn't old then. I was a lusty woman, I says, and a fine-looking woman, and I lived in a cottage wi' two floors, and I had a feather bed, and a dresser full o' cloam, Squire Clabar. I ha' lived to see the maid come home, and, please the good Lord, I'll live to a better day, and see her and you back in your own place——"

"Are you not still talking?" Clabar broke in, extending his hand for the empty cup. "Ah, the young gentleman comes!"

"The young gentleman!" cried Mother Gothel.

"My son—young Peter!"

The old woman rose in a fluster. She bowed to the mighty youth; she stared at the stalwart shoulders; then she started forward with the cry. "My dear, I know ye! I would never ha' known your father's son, but I know your mother's daughter."

And the old soul wept over Cherry's hand and kissed it.

"Sit down, Mother," said Clabar, "and Cherry shall inform you how she has added the strength of a man to a maiden's comeliness."

"I'll take no rest, and drink no ale, till I ha' returned thanks to the Lord Almighty for this great miracle. No such thing has ever come to pass since folk were made—a man and maiden two in one! 'Tis brave magic, I tell ye. 'Tis the holy magic o' the Lord, who sets his hand on folk and changes 'em. I ha' seen the like o' you—I don't know where I saw ye. Maybe when I was sot upon Poldrifty in the evening, wi' darkness coming down upon me; or in the night wi' the old moon shining on the rocks, and a bit of misty stuff around me. I ha' thought of some one strong like you, and beautiful as well; and I ha' said to myself, 'Jacob Grambla be the man of Moyle, but there shall be a better man of Moyle than he.'"

Then Mother Gothel fell back upon a chair and called for ale.

"You was strong as a little baby," she continued. "You hadn't been in this world o' lies two days afore you kicked the basin o' pap into the fire. Out o' my hand you kicked mun—and I was a lusty woman then, aw, and a fine-looking woman too, as Squire will tell ye. Didn't I say her would grow monstrous strong, Squire Clabar, when her kicked the pap into the fire?"

"I believe she was a week old," said the father.

"Two days, I tell ye—I mind it well. Her was so powerful strong, her tore the cloam. Her never took

to pap like other babies. Her craved for meat avore the teeth had come. My dear, I be old Mother Gothall, who nursed you in these old arms—I was a fine woman then—and hid you away from Master Grambla—and I knows you would never be standing here all big and beautiful, if it warn't for me."

"I am grateful, Mother," said Cherry. "I shall come to Poldrifty to tell you what I have done and seen; and sometimes I will bring in wood for you and carry water. Father, we must find a safe place for the guineas. Shall we ask Mother Gothall to hide them for us?"

"It is a good thought," said Clabar; but when he had explained the matter to Mother Gothall she threw up her hands and cried:

"Tempt me wi' guineas! Ask a weak and sinful body to hide your money! You would never see one o' they guineas again, Squire Clabar. I would dig a pit under a stone, and put 'em away, and I wouldn't tell ye where I hid 'em, and I would fight ye both if you went near 'em. Trust me with guineas and you raise the devil! I had a house once—aw, a house wi' two floors—and a black gown for Sundays, and a white gown for fair-day, and a man to work for me. And now I be an old witch body, biding in a hole of turves and stone. Give me all they golden guineas to watch for ye, and I would get me again a house wi' two floors, and a gown for Sunday, and another for fair-day, and maybe a man to work for me; for I be a wicked woman—aw, and a cunning woman—when I smells a guinea. See how my fingers be bent to take 'em while I'm talking!"

"Then we must find another way," said Clabar. "And now, Mother, what of the ghost?"

The old woman drew on her cap of mystery as she answered, "He ha' come for Master Grambla."

"He did not raise it?"

"Master Grambla raise the dead! Have ye served

the man these years, Squire Clabar, and yet do not know how he walks a mile at night rather than see the graves in the churchyard ? ”

“ I did not think it,” Clabar muttered.

“ ’Tisn’t the ghost of a Clabar,” cried Mother Gothel.

“ ’Tis a little old man like, and it wears a big red cap.”

“ Who has summoned it from the world of spirits ? ”

“ Evil conscience,” Cherry murmured.

“ Is it Sir Thomas, Mother ? ”

“ Who raises spirits from the dead, Squire Clabar ? Folk be always talking about heaven, but when there comes a sign from heaven they swear ’tis the devil’s work. You know I bain’t a witch ; but I sits up over on Poldrifty, and I sees a thing or two. I hear the wind, and I watch the clouds, and I feel good sunshine—and I earn a bit o’ food by lying, and get me a few sticks for the fire—but there be plenty going on what I can’t sense. A bad man don’t last, Squire Clabar, not even in this world. The devil drives ’en on, but the Lord be at the side o’ the pit, and pushes ’en back, and gives ’en another chance—seventy chances the Lord gives a wicked man. Master Grambla ha’ brought you to this from Coinagehall,” said the old woman, waving her crooked stick from wall to wall of the poor cottage.

“ To worse than this,” groaned Clabar. “ Next week we are homeless.”

“ But the Lord ha’ worked two miracles for ye,” cried Mother Gothel, pointing the stick at Cherry. “ The Lord ha’ sent you son and daughter in one body ; and he sends a spirit to ruin Master Grambla.”

CHAPTER VII

RUTH RECEIVES THE SPRING

THOUGH her mind was in the house, Ruth tarried long in the sunshine ; fearful lest Jacob might conquer terror and return. Besides, the spring was in her blood. So she wandered through what had been the pleasance of a family which cared for flowers and herbs ; as a nun, imprisoned by the rules of her order, might have lingered among the ruins of her desecrated cloister.

Clabars of the past included a love of gardens among their virtues. They had preserved many of the plants grown by the monks, both in herb-ground and flower-piece ; and not only had improved upon the old but had introduced the new. To Jacob the fairest flowering plant was but a conspicuous weed ; he would have preferred docks and nettles because such growths were strong, assertive in their roots and lives, and noted destroyers of the weak.

The boundaries of that nearly vanished garden were marked by walks beneath yews, and giant box-hedges ; and the space thus enclosed lay neglected because there was no profit to be made by conquering the gross legions of the weeds ; while fruit, herb, and vegetable in season were brought to Coinagehall by parishioners ; either as gifts, or as settlement of some slight claim ; for money was scarce, so that many a poor fisherman hardly handled a coin during the year, but paid his debts, or bought what articles he needed, with the contents of his pilchard creel.

Flowers, like sunshine, gave themselves to the attorney, as to the Clabars ; more, they struggled to

give themselves, and fought from couch-grass through the bramble—many dying in the attempt—to attract his notice ; just as the sun would conquer rain-clouds to restore a wounded and despairing footpad. Daffodils and anemones enriched the grass, with hepaticas like handfuls of jewels the dawn had scattered : along the shaded ways primroses were plentiful, and here crown imperials gave a flush of life. The crocus opened its golden chalice to the bees, wall-flowers surrounded Ruth with their passionate perfume ; and the almond-tree, more lovely than a robed princess, blushed a warm pink in her pure nakedness before the swelling shrubbery of buds.

Ruth walked not there to think of Jacob Grambla : flowers and sweet smells in the air had nothing in common with his meagre body and fustian clothes. Nor of ghostly Red Cap ; for the spring morning could not agree with apparitions. She was thinking of herself, supremely selfish ; wondering what would happen ; trying to create a future which might fit the events of yesterday—and succeeding. But then she bought her future ready-made, and paid for it with hope deferred. It was a dreaming walk, and the only realities outside her body were sunshine and soft breezes. There was no ruined garden visibly present ; neither flower nor leaf. And within her body was a mind lit with a new understanding of nature, a brain touched by fancy, and a heart panting for all that life had promised. Yet she was afraid.

Presently Ruth entered the hall, and stood at the foot of the stairs, her eyes upon those dusty footmarks. She had advanced on tiptoe, terrified by the sounds of her own presence. She longed to ascend, yet, like Jacob, dared not set foot in the upstairs rooms. In spite of the perfect light she shrank from those unused chambers ; for in one perhaps was the figure which might haunt her life, guiding it towards happiness, or leading it to ruin ; and life was such a precious thing because

it came but once ; and went too often like the thread broken on the spinning-wheel, or like the brief hour of that hibernating butterfly, then drifting down the stairs towards the promised summer, and frosty night to follow, with the dust of winter dry upon its wings.

Even the insect made a sound of fluttering, causing Ruth to start back ; for this creature was a thing of life, and it descended from the haunted chambers to forsake the house. A small thing to increase her nervousness, but upon this day even flies were prophets. It was necessary to ascend the stairs, but first she must arouse her dreaming self by a walk across the fields, so that she might win some confidence by exercise and compose that rebellious body with a discipline.

The day was still very young : sunshine might give way to sleet by noon. She would go to the farmstead, and bring home cream and butter ; a little more than last week, for Jacob would surely bring the constable who, with staff of office in bold right hand, would search the chambers ; and it might be her duty to serve him with a supper.

The sun was free upon the fields, but beyond the pathway ran into shade beside a stream where primroses were dashed with spray. Ruth was awakening, and her ears were listening. Her eyes looked upon a world which had changed in one night and become marvellously younger. Never before had she discovered music in running water. Never had she thought of a connection between the love of heaven and the rush to live of spring. Decidedly primroses had never whispered ballads in her ears before. She bent to pluck a bloom, and kissed it.

Upon the return journey she ran, where the path went downward, fully awake now that she had spoken with the old wife at the farm, and conscious of her folly in leaving the house unguarded. Jacob might have sent a messenger to explore the unknown regions of his own demesne. Some gentleman of the road,

finding the door open, might have been tempted by the silence within to search the rooms, and to plunge his thievish hands into the attorney's hoard of stolen guineas. Even the curate might have called in her absence, hoping to exorcise Red Cap with Greek quotations and a discreet use of the magic pentacle. Ruth shivered at the thought of a stranger's ascent towards the haunted chambers, whether armed with staff of office, pistols of lawlessness, or cabalistic lore.

Her mind was more at ease when she entered, again on tiptoe, and failed to find fresh footprints in the dust. After all, as the old clock in the kitchen informed her with many a wheeze and chuckle, the day was scarce one half-hour older. Ruth was accustomed in her loneliness to chatter with the clock ; but this morning all her words were whispers, and they were addressed to her own new mind.

The time had come when she must go to the haunted chamber which—as she knew well—contained a great bedstead whereon all manner of Cornish worthies had reposed. So she left the kitchen, smiling a little, but grave about the eyes ; and as she crossed the hall a robin burst into song from a rose-bush near the porch ; and Ruth longed to understand the language of that bird.

The stairs did not creak, for they were oak and disdained all weakness. One by one Ruth climbed to the twenty-fourth and last, counting them and wondering at the end where she had passed the step which marked her year ; for she did not know her age. The robin sang on, another answered, and the house became joyous. The birds were about to mate, to make the home, and to rear the young ; so they sang in the joy of marriage, and their pride of plumage, to tell the world no springtime should be lost.

Yet joy of life and sunshine go together. Shadows were deep and sounds were muffled along the passage, where spiders had acquired long leaseholds of the

windows, and wainscoting was freehold of the mice ; as darkness lurks in corners of the cathedral while the choir sing Easter anthems. Because of the gloom and damp, Ruth felt some sadness ; but a black cobweb fell from a pane like a filthy rag as she passed by, and the light streamed through ; and she was glad again, for the sun seemed with her.

More than robins were singing in the garden ; blackbirds and thrushes had joined in ; and her heart answered—how noisily it went, as she tapped the chamber door, and bravely cried :

“ Ghost, awake ! Good ghost, it is time to hide.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE PLACE IS HAUNTED

THE forenoon was spent before Clabar and his daughter, who walked with long strides, clutching the parcel of guineas, reached the fields of Coinagehall ; and at one of the high hedges they came by chance upon Toby Penrice whistling carelessly while he cut a hazel twig. Cherry caught sight of the big figure at some distance, but Clabar was not disturbed, for they were still upon the right of way.

" I told you nobody dared to trespass. I had forgot Toby," he said.

" Is this fellow a lunatic ? " she asked.

" A very simple, poor, and idle gentleman. His father left him a small property, which he sold, and now lives upon the capital. I fear the money will not last his time, for 'tis said Grambla had it for investment. He is also friendly to Toby, and has given him our cottage as a sign of his fatal kindness. Toby will pay dear, I fancy, for the hares he has stolen from Coinagehall, ay, and for the stick he is now cutting from the hedge.—Good morning, Toby," he called.

" Do you make a spring to catch a rabbit ? "

" Good morning, Mr. Clabar," replied the idler. " Here is weather to set us all a-singing. Here is black-thorn in the bloom already. I get me a fork of hazel to find water, Mr. Clabar ; for I promised a farmer of the next parish to discover a spring upon his land, and the divining rod is the surest way to find it."

He was staring at the stalwart Cherry as he spoke.

"Here is my son Peter, just arrived from Plymouth," said Clabar awkwardly.

"Your servant, sir," mumbled Toby, fumbling with his knife. "I shall be happy to serve you, sir. If you are fond of the angle, I will show you where the best trout lie. I will sell you a dog, or buy you a horse ; and if you have need of a fishing net I will make one for you. Sir, I promise you no man knows this parish of Moyle half so well as I do. I will teach you every path and lane within ten miles, and if you have a liking for good ale you may trust me—ay, sir, you may trust me there."

"I thank you for your kindness," said Cherry in her deepest voice.

"A good bass truly," said Toby, still fixed in the same attitude. "'Twould go with the bassoon. We need a mighty voice to go with the bassoon played by Master Trillian. Sir, I would have you know we sing the psalms right merrily in Moyle. We will sing against any parish, sir. Master Trillian is blacksmith, and a mighty man in wind. Last Easter morn, when we lifted up their heads, O ye gates, he blew the wig of Master Smart, who plays the flute, clean off his head. Sir, you are a man of Moyle, I take it."

"I was born here," replied Cherry.

"Then you are a parishioner and a Cornishman. Sir, the men of Cornwall will not be English until the river Tamar is removed by Act of Parliament. I have some history ; I was taught by my father, who was a famous man. Sir, he had a ewe which bore three lambs five years in succession, and not one was lost. My father was painted, standing beside the ewe, with a wreath of laurel upon his head."

"What was upon the head of the ewe ? " asked Cherry.

"Why, sir, nothing. She was a brute beast which hath no understanding. My father desired a lamb to appear upon his tomb ; but the mason by an error carved a ram."

"I have seen the lamb painted upon windows of churches in Plymouth," said Cherry.

"Sir, this was envy," replied Toby. "The churchwardens knew of my father's fame, and desired the parishioners to believe their ewes were no less prolific."

"Come," whispered Clabar. "This fellow would stand the whole day talking." Then he said aloud, "I go with my son around these lanes, which are the boundaries of Coinagehall. We must not linger."

"I would have you beware of robbers," said Toby.

"Why so? Our parish roads are said to be free from that vermin."

"Yesterday in the afternoon, as I set nets for rabbits yonder," replied Toby, pointing into the forbidden territory, "I saw a young man crawling in the shade. He seemed to be wounded, but when I came near he ran and got away. I heard him groan and, fearing he played decoy, and would have led me into some secret place where his gang lay hidden, I turned me back."

"There are ghosts in Moyle," said Clabar.

"And they are given to groaning," Cherry added.

"Ghosts and strangers are the like to me," said Toby. "I welcome neither one nor t'other. But I would sooner face a spirit than a cut-purse. 'Tis ill to be frightened, but worse to be killed; for a man, look ye, will get over his fright and know a pretty tale to tell the parish; but he will not get over his killing till the day of judgment. Mr. Clabar, sir, I wish you happiness. I take your cottage because Mr. Grambla says I must. He would send me to jail, sir, for evading the game laws, for trespassing upon his property, for taking his hares—he would frame a dozen indictments against me."

"Say nothing, Toby. I believe you are an honest man," said Clabar shortly.

"Young sir, we shall meet again. I will teach you to hunt the otter. Sir, you will pardon me," cried Toby, fumbling again with knife and fork of hazel.

"I have walked this parish since I was a child. I have seen all manner of folk, both young and old—I have some learning, sir, and have travelled, twenty miles to the west, and as many to the east. But, sir, I have never set eyes upon a gentleman like you."

"I come from the town," said Cherry.

"Sir, if all young gentlemen of the town are strong and handsome, I wonder no longer why the maidens desire to go there. Were the ladies as handsome as the men, I would even travel to the town myself—and did one smile upon me I would stay there," he declared.

"This is a very curious fellow," remarked Cherry, as they idled down the lane.

"And one I would beg you to distrust," her father answered. "Let us stand within this coppice till he goes off to dinner—I see he glances at his watch, the sun."

"Is he one of Grambla's creatures?"

"I think he has not wit enough; but he is friendly with the rascal, and doubtless gives him information, even if they do not both drive their geese to the same market. As you see, this Toby is an idler, yet one who must be always doing something. He will make whips for the farmers, or dress a fly for anglers; train a dog, or accustom a horse to harness; and is, I am told, skilful at knotting twine. He follows the hunt, and is ready to give a hand when needed; while sometimes he will carry a message from this parish to the next. He is much in favour with the farmers, for he informs them when gipsies have settled upon their land, or when poachers have set their gins; though in my opinion he is himself the greatest poacher in the country. He is, in short, a meddlesome fellow, and something of a spy; but you will not find he informs against any person that is stronger than himself."

"He is not married?"

"Nay, he has courted every maid from fourteen upwards; all like his face no better than his prospects."

There is no Ugly Club in Moyle, such as exists in the metropolis ; else Toby would surely be elected to the chair of president."

When the subject of these remarks was seen whistling his way to Moyle, father and daughter left the coppice for the fields, and described a devious course towards the house. Clabar was unwilling to draw too near ; but Cherry, full of ardour, went ahead.

"There is only a maid in the house, and her place is the kitchen," she declared.

"She might look out by chance and discover us. Then she would tell her father, not out of ill-will, but to give excuse for speaking.- Our coming would be an adventure in her life."

"She could only see us from the upstairs windows."

"These rooms are closed and now deserted," sighed Clabar heavily.

"You are mistaken !" exclaimed Cherry, a few moments later. "See ! a window stands open."

"There I was born. It was the chamber of my parents."

"Unless my eyes deceived me, I saw the movement of a figure."

"Let us not hasten," said Clabar.

"Two generations of Clabar run from the natural daughter of a thief !" said Cherry scornfully. "This way, father, towards the thick shrubbery. We will make through it until we come opposite the door. We lose dignity by cowardice, not by prudence."

"What did you see at the window ?" asked Clabar ; for he suspected Jacob might have returned suddenly to the house.

"A movement only, as of a figure passing—or perhaps a curtain shaken by the breeze."

They gained the shrubbery and passed through into the garden, proceeding without difficulty behind yew and laurel, until they reached a Judas tree, which Clabar recognised as standing nearly opposite the

porch. They waited some minutes, and when no sound reached their ears, advanced until only a few bushes separated their bodies from the open space. Standing there, a few paces from the house—the door of which was closed—Clabar pointed out the various rooms upon that side, and in a trembling voice recalled many an incident of family history.

“Beneath that chimney-stack I slept as a boy. Behind that window I stood upon wet days to call the sunshine back. Down those steps I fell, when a child, and cut my forehead grievously. Along that path, now covered with grass—where the lilacs grow—was my mother’s favourite walk. Across that field—I see it as a lawn—my father would pace at evening groaning at the state of his affairs.”

So he ran on, bringing the old years back without their life.

“This place is haunted indeed,” the daughter murmured.

“By worthy folk to Clabars ; by demons to a Grambla,” he answered.

“Is it richly furnished ? ”

“Nay, child. This house is now an empty shell, through which our name moans each time the wind blows. Weighty furniture remains—the old beds and clothes-presses—I know not what else, save a picture or two. I have not stood here since I was young. My past is again present, and some day his past shall lie before him.”

They wandered a little further through the shrubbery, and came out upon the other side of the house, where it was shady after midday ; and in their eagerness forgot to hide. Here a dim pathway went towards the outbuildings, to be lost at the bend among bushes of box and laurel, so that any one passing towards them would have appeared with suddenness. Both were engrossed and took no heed of the silence ; for birds had ceased to sing. Then a blackbird flew past screaming.

They looked at each other, and Clabar aroused himself from thought to pursue with sad eyes the flight of the frightened bird.

"There is nobody," said Cherry.

"We have spent an hour already upon folly," he said impatiently. "I do not come here again. The sight of the old place sets my heart back. Come, Cherry! there is a wall here we can climb. If we came like owners we will go like thieves."

"Ah!" she exclaimed. "Father! Father!"

Startled by her voice and sudden pallor, Clabar started round—for he had turned to go—and looked out into the shade.

A man walked slowly before the hedge of box and laurel, looking down upon the grass. He wore a remarkable hat, not unlike an orange-basket, an enormous ruff, a slashed doublet with slit sleeves, a long cloak, a pair of trunk-hose, and square shoes adorned with roses. He wore no wig, and his hair was twisted on each side of his head in a peculiar fashion.

A woman appeared upon the pathway, advancing towards the man with the same sluggish steps; and her face was practically invisible, for she wore a hood of thick velvet which projected on each side of her head; between her yellow ruff and this quaint head-gear the face was almost lost: her gown, trailing upon the grass, appeared as heavy as armour, for it was stiff with embroidery of silver; her shoes were also square-toed, while her stockings were scarlet.

"What are they?" whispered Cherry at length.

"Spirits of our ancestors," her father muttered, placing a hand before his eyes.

"Those garments were not made since the revolution. They were the fashion in the reign of Queen Elizabeth," she murmured.

The silent couple were now pacing the turf, where had been formerly the bowling-green; side by side as if related, but strangers to the world they walked in.

"Can you give them names?" asked Cherry.

"I have seen his portrait. It hangs above the fireplace in the dining-room."

"And the woman?"

"His wife, and my grandmother. I know them by their dresses."

"His ruff looks as full of holes as a lawyer's conscience. Ghosts seen in day-time do not freeze my blood. I will address them."

"Stay!" muttered Clabar.

"I will go. If they are ghosts they come to warn us, and these gentry may not speak to a mortal till they are addressed."

But before she could break clear of the bushes the ghostly pair withdrew in the same silent manner; and when Cherry reached the path they had departed. She tried to follow, but the place was deserted and as silent as it had been. Clabar was leaning against a tree, seeing nothing, but sighing woefully.

Cherry returned and in a valiant mood opened the front door, entered the house, and advanced into the kitchen. There was no sign of life in Coinagehall, beyond the clock, a garrulous body which wheezed a welcome gladly. The fire, she perceived, was dead.

"I make nothing of this," she told her father. "I looked into the dining-room—'tis now a bed-chamber—and saw the portrait. It is the figure that we saw."

"The father and mother of my parents."

"Where is the maiden Ruth?"

"Gone into town upon some duty. A poor weak timid maid, who lacks the spirit to wish a man good morning. Come! we will return across the fields—I care not who sees us now. This place is haunted, this parish is enchanted."

"Let us believe rather," replied Cherry, "these spirits of our ancestors appeared, not to warn us, nor yet to frighten us away; but to welcome John Clabar and his daughter home to Coinagehall."

CHAPTER IX

A SAD DOG TELLS HIS STORY

"Now," cried the Elizabethan lady, "you have played the ghost indeed!"

"Egad, 'twas a pretty trick," replied her gallant. "But what if they should tell upon me?"

"That they will never do. Master Clabar would not wish any one to know he had trespassed here; and for the same reason the young man with him will keep silent. I shall not tell of them—nay, I cannot, being a ghost. To tell a tale would be to disclose a personality, which at this moment I do not possess. While you, sir, have been out of the human body these last two days."

"Yesterday I passed as an evil spirit wearing a red cap," said the Elizabethan gentleman. "To-day I go in the gala dress of a yeoman of old time."

"And to-morrow you shall be yourself again."

"To be myself," said the gallant solemnly, "is to risk playing the part of spirit without a mask."

"I trust, sir, you are jesting," she faltered.

"A true word, lady. I have broken jail. But let us get out of these moth-eaten garments, and restore them to the clothes-presses," he said briskly. "They smell to me like grave-clothes; and, to be honest, this fashion does not suit you."

Ruth and her stranger were hidden in the coach-house, which was separated from the garden by a wall and waste of weedy court. They stood at the foot of a ladder leading to the hay-loft; and behind the trap-door above they would have made themselves safe

had Cherry followed. The man was young and handsome, but in so weak a condition he seemed hardly able to support the weight of his borrowed garments; while he breathed heavily as if exhausted by the slight adventure.

"Come with me to the house," said Ruth with a dangerous tenderness. "The spies are gone. The man whom I call father does not return till evening. He dines at the village ordinary."

"He is a small man?"

"Who fights with his brain."

"This morning I heard you dare him to go up; I learnt then the manner of man he is. So I stood behind the door, with the knife you gave me ready."

"I wished him to go, yet I hoped he would stay; for I knew you must kill him."

As Ruth made this admission they entered the house.

"Alone I would have struck him once and left the result to heaven. If he recovered of the wound—well," said the young man calmly. "My sentence cannot be increased; but knowing you would have shared it as my accomplice, I should have killed."

"For my sake," she murmured.

"Lady, your honour is in my keeping," he answered, overhearing her. "You give me all the aids to live, and each hour increases my weight of debt. You buy me with your pity and your kindness. Yesterday I reached this parish at the end of my power, looking forward to death in a ditch—for I had eaten nothing these three days—and prepared to surrender to any stripling. What manner of man is your constable?"

"He is very stout, and 'tis said no hero," she answered lightly.

"I know his sort. One thrust in the paunch and he lies on his back."

"Sit here while I prepare your dinner," ordered Ruth. She had cast off the head-gear, but retained the cumbersome gown which swept the floor.

"At last I came to this estate at break of day," her hero continued. "Seeing a copse, I chose that place to die in. I lay for some hours, and in the madness of my hunger devoured a vast quantity of the small yellow flowers which grow there."

"They saved your life," cried Ruth. "These primroses are excellent for salad."

"The flowers had but continued my misery without you," he answered. "I was aroused by the barking of dogs, and, fearing lest some sportsman might enter the copse, I came out and began to cross the fields. A man, with the form of a farmer and the face of a fool, challenged me, and with my last strength I ran towards the house. Again I lay in the bushes. Then, with the knowledge that my end was near, I crawled out into the garden, and, seeing a window open, I climbed into the room and fell upon the bed. When my senses departed I did not expect to see the world again."

"While I forgot you had lain upon the bed," said Ruth. "I am a poor conspirator. It was indeed fortunate my master had seen a ghost, and was on that account too frightened to catch me in my speech. He spoke of a man, and I supposed he meant you. Then he spoke of an evil spirit wearing a red cap, and I had the wit to make you the ghostly substitute. But I must warn you, sir, Jacob Grambla is too cunning a lawyer to be deceived for long. He will assuredly desire to know why I am consuming so much food."

"Tell him worms were in the meat, and you were forced to throw it out."

"I should not have thought of that ingenious answer," said Ruth simply. "I beg you now go upstairs and change your garments. When you return I shall have your dinner waiting; and you must eat heartily, for I can give you no more until the morning. And while you are eating I will put off this frippery."

"I obey the commandments of my lady, though I have neglected those of the Church; but in that respect I hope to amend," said the stranger.

He bowed and made for the door, but turned suddenly, and, taking her hands, pressed them together against his heart and did not trust himself to speak. It was done like a gentleman, and Ruth replied like a modest little lady with sighs and blushes and unruly eyes. Then he withdrew quickly, while she pressed her hands upon her heated face, and did not think she was a kitchen-wench; for by welcoming a poor wayfarer she was entertaining a king's son in disguise.

"This morning I was afraid of my stranger, but now I know him—and could even tell secrets to him," she said to her old companion the clock, which could only reply with jealous wheezings and spasmodic jerking of a hand which had not pointed truly the last twelvemonth.

When her hero descended in his own shabby raiment, Ruth felt again a little cowardice, and slipped away to don her workaday clothing, while the gentleman dined. After a decent interval she returned to the kitchen, and fed upon scraps with a mouse's appetite, and there was silence between them for some time.

"Does nobody ever come to this house?" he asked at length.

"An old woman from the farm below brings what we require. Some poor folk call with fish and vegetables. There come also pedlars with their trifles to tempt maids, and Romans with their brushes and baskets. But none of these can pass the door."

"Does the lawyer receive no company?"

"Nay, he is to be found each day at his office. He is not of the gentry, and he keeps no servants."

"Is he not a man of fortune?"

"I know nothing of that, but I believe him to be poor."

"Does he pay you for serving him?"

She shook her head and smiled.

"These are your wages then: a little food, a sleeping place, garments to cover you, and solitude," said the young man fiercely.

"I tell him what articles I require, and sometimes he buys them. I have never held a coin in my hand with the knowledge it was mine."

The stranger rose and walked weakly to the window. He stood there and without turning spoke. "Some day you shall have fine dresses and a purse of gold. I swear it."

"Come now," said Ruth, so soon as she could command her voice. "Let us make plans. We are assured of solitude for the next three hours; afterwards every moment is a time of danger."

"I am not to lie in this house to-night?" he asked, returning slowly to the fire-place.

"I believe Mr. Grambla will come earlier than usual, for he is now afraid to be abroad at twilight," she answered. "I will carry blankets into the loft, and there you shall lie until strong enough to leave me—to go upon your business, sir, I would say," cried Ruth in much confusion.

"I thank you," said the young man deeply. "I have so much to thank you for, I know not which act of kindness to place first. Lady, I owe no man a penny, nor any woman thanks but you. This is the first debt I have contracted and, by the God of Heaven, the interest shall be paid before I go—ay, and part of the capital, if need be, with my life."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Ruth. "Nay, sir, remember we are here alone. I believe, sir, you are a gentleman, though I know not your name; while I am but a poor maid, who never saw her parents, has a borrowed name, a rogue for father, and no friends."

"Save one."

"And he came yesterday."

"From jail, where he lay awaiting death."

"I will be your judge," said Ruth. "I discharge you, prisoner."

"What if the prisoner will not accept discharge? If he insists upon being bound?"

"Then he must be removed by force," said Ruth, and skipped away, laughing happily, yet wondering why she grew so fearless.

An hour later all traces of an uninvited guest had been obliterated from the upstairs room, blankets been carried to the loft, dinner things washed; and as the evening was still far off, maiden and interloper seated themselves beside the kitchen fire, the one with her knitting, the other with his thoughts.

"We have two hours of safety yet," said Ruth. "Even if the master should return so long before his time, we shall hear the sound of his footsteps and the opening of the door. Then you must escape by the back and run for the loft."

"And now let me tell you my story," said the stranger.

"I shall be happy to listen," said Ruth. "But if you close my ears, you are to keep your own wide open."

"You called me a gentleman," began the wayfarer, "and I believe I have some right to that title; for my father, after he retired from trade, was pleased to forget he had stood behind the counter, and was indeed not displeased when mistaken for a buck. My name, lady, is Job Cay. If it sounds unpleasantly upon your ears, I beg of you to blame my father, who numbered among his eccentricities a curious liking for brevity. Both in speaking and writing he would confine himself to words of one syllable; and when a longer word was unavoidable, he would set the syllables apart if writing a letter, or if speaking he

would seek to explain his meaning by signs and gestures. He wrote so ill a hand that one day I inquired how much had been spent upon his education ; and this was the only occasion I knew him to answer with an oath—yet even that was a word of one syllable. I was called Job because my father could not discover a shorter name ; although he satisfied his love for brevity by addressing me as J. He gave me only two pieces of advice, and both were useless. The first was, never use two words when one will serve your purpose ; and the second, laugh all your life at love. These pieces of advice I followed, lady, until I presently discovered that a man of one word is apt to be treated shortly by his fellows, and when a man laughs at love, all women laugh at him.”

“ Was not your father something of an oddity ? ” inquired Ruth.

“ He was, lady, and for that reason I describe him to you ; for you must know a son inherits some part of his father’s character. Old Ned, as the author of my being styled himself, with his accustomed shortness, was what is known as a regular being. He rose at seven, breakfasted at eight, walked until two, dined at that hour, dozed till four, drank coffee at Tom’s at six, retired to bed at nine. And that was his whole life. He allowed himself one pinch of snuff before breakfast, two pinches before dinner, three during the afternoon, and four going to bed. You are now as well acquainted with this man of brevity—who would, I believe, have taken the name of Short, had it not been for purposes of business longer than Cay—as I am myself.

“ My mother ruled the household, for she had early joined a Society of Married Ladies, who agreed among themselves that every altercation between husband and wife should be settled by the members at their weekly meeting, the husband not being admitted to avoid contention. My father retired from the contest

when he discovered his wife was able to bring the weight and influence of the Society to bear against him ; and he refrained from argument because it upset the regularity of his life, and he was unable to do justice to his intelligence by the use of monosyllables. Therefore it happened that my career was marred at the outset by the folly and ignorance of a doting mother. Had she been blessed with a large family, my mother would have distributed that affection, which she lavished entirely upon me, the only child. My father sent me to school, but during the first winter my mother brought me away, fearing lest I should suffer from the cold ; and when I informed her the master had whipped me for some fault, she would not suffer me to return. Finding me not unwilling to resume my studies, she relented ; but when I showed her my books, she declared immediately that her darling should not injure his fine eyes—so she was pleased to style them—by poring over the nasty barbarous letters of the Greek language. My case was referred to the Society, and when the President had informed my mother that Greek and Latin had been written by the heathen, she cast my school books at once upon the fire, and decided to undertake herself my education. The only classic with which she was acquainted chanced to be Hoyle's *Short Treatise upon Whist* ; and this, I will confess, she taught me thoroughly.

"I was approaching manhood, and winning the character of a fine gentleman, when I was deprived of both my parents by the smallpox. They died within a week of each other, and it was well my mother did not survive her husband who, as I speedily discovered, had invested his savings in an annuity, and had been unable to discover words sufficiently short to acquaint his wife and son of the fact that his death would make them paupers. My father, who desired to give me a full education, I now despise ; for my mother, who forced ignorance upon me, and taught me gambling, I have the

kindest feeling. But I have come to hate Hoyle's treatise, and with all my soul I loathe the Society of Married Ladies. The advice I received from my father you have heard. The maxims instilled into me by my mother were, to avoid a cold, a quarrel, and a naughty woman. The young man who escapes this trinity of mischief is not mortal.

"I was now in my eighteenth year left entirely dependent on my uncle, an old bachelor who is almost as great an oddity as his brother. He received me at his home near Salisbury with a great deal of kindness and, not being himself conspicuous for learning, failed to observe my ignorance until certain of his friends spoke to him on the subject. He then decided to send me to the curate of an adjoining parish for one year, in order that I might complete the education which I had never properly commenced, and before parting with me promised to leave me a great part of his fortune if I continued to please him. Placed with my tutor, a kind and worthy man, I made but slow progress, for he was a scholar while I was a dunce, and he attempted to bring me to the top of the ladder before I could with safety balance upon the lowest rung. However, I learnt as much as I could, and returned to my uncle at the expiration of the year, with the intention of showing him I had not neglected my opportunities for improvement.

"From that time nothing went well with me. I was nineteen, and desirous of airing my knowledge ; so I talked against my uncle and his friends, and, having a good memory, repeated many of the phrases I had gathered from the lips of my worthy tutor. I talked for victory, but ended with defeat. My uncle grew old and quarrelsome, and had been always master at his table. His friends, recognising that he had no conversation, did not cross him, while I contradicted him even upon such a matter as the proper time for sowing peas and beans, although I

had no knowledge of that art. Soon I experienced nothing but the severest treatment. If I discussed a subject, I was called presumptuous. If I remained silent, I was styled a sullen dog. I endured this harshness with as much patience as I could show, until the old gentleman took to upbraiding me for an ungrateful scoundrel before the servants; and, perceiving at last he had taken a strong dislike to me, I retired to the house of a gentleman who had shown me kindness and requested him to find me some employment. This he very politely promised to do, and I then disclosed the treatment I had received from my uncle. He frowned at this, and desired me to seek a reconciliation. Instead of doing so, I sent a message to inform my uncle I could no longer seek the hospitality of a relation who had daily reproached me with poverty and reminded me I was dependent upon his bounty. The same day one of his servants brought me a guinea wrapped in paper, upon which I found written a few angry words announcing his intention of cutting me off entirely. I showed this with a laugh to the gentleman with whom I stayed, but he made no answer, and presently found an excuse for leaving me. Nor did we meet again, for he sent his butler to inform me he was setting out for town immediately, and felt obliged to state he could not foresee any opportunity for continuing our friendship. The next day I cast myself upon the world, with a pack of cards in one pocket, and a guinea in the other. You have now listened to my story."

"I was promising myself," said Ruth, "that the most interesting part was yet to come."

"I have concluded the history of my gentlehood," replied Cay. "What follows is the memoir of a sad dog; a record of ordinary adventure such as falls to the lot of every homeless rascal. It would be tedious telling, and might make no pleasant hearing. For three years I have done battle with the world, giving

and receiving wounds. Yesterday I believed myself defeated ; but thanks to you I live to fight again—with greater courage."

" And with honesty ? "

" Ay, that too may help."

" You have escaped from prison ! "

" In an ill moment, and half starving, I snatched a purse from a fat parson who rolled beside the wall of Exeter. I did not perceive he had a dog with him, and the brute brought me down when I sought to run. While awaiting the scaffold I managed to escape."

" You would surely have been hanged," she shuddered.

" The laws of this country would murder every man of spirit. The parson swore I had threatened to slit his throat, though I spoke no word ; while another man appeared against me, and took his oath I had also robbed him, though I had never set eyes upon his lying face before. 'Tis ill, mistress, to commit a crime ; for that one breeds a score of damning charges."

" How have you earned a living ? " she asked pityingly.

" In this way and that," he replied evasively. " I have lately set up as a mountebank. I got some honest shillings by the cards, so I bought a few dozen boxes of pills which I believed would do no hurt, and a parcel of blistering-plasters. I bought also an old drum, and hired a one-legged sailor to beat it ; but the rascal stole my drum and I doubt not parted with it for a dram. So I set out alone into the country, finding too many practitioners in the town, and passed through the villages until I reached Exeter ; having by then exhausted my stock of pills and plasters, and finding myself again without money, for my capital had been spent upon food and lodging."

" Shall you persevere in the same profession when you go from here ? " asked Ruth, unable to conceal her interest, and supposing, in innocence, that a mounte-

bank was equally as expert as any member of the Surgeons' College.

"I should do so if I could obtain a few guineas," he said eagerly. "I would then hire a room and compound my own blistering-plasters after a novel and ingenious style. I should require plaster, vinegar of squills, cantharides, with a plentiful stock of strong linen upon which to spread the mixture. I find the country folk buy them gladly. There is a fortune to be had, mistress, by these same blistering-plasters, and I could prepare a vast number in one day."

"What ailments do they cure?" asked Ruth.

"Nay, you must not tease me with such questions. It is enough for me to do the selling. I enter a village and address the first dame I meet, somewhat after this style :

"'Well-a-day, my good woman, I see you are hipped. I am the famous Doctor Alexander the Great, of whom I doubt not you have heard. I have cured all London town, and am now come to cure you. What, think you, is the nature of your complaint?'

"'Why, doctor,' says she. 'I am well enough. I have no sickness that I know of.'

"'I can tell you are going to have a violent fever,' say I. 'Your face is hot, and your breathing short. Put out your tongue. Ah! Ah! I was afraid of it. 'Tis what I thought. Open your mouth wide that I may look down your throat.'

"The good soul obeys, for she grows alarmed. I glance at her tongue, explore her throat, and my face becomes solemn as I say :

"'I see clearly enough. Yes, yes, my poor woman, I see! I see!'

"'What do ye see, doctor?' cries the dame.

"'I see the great avenue to the vital organs; the high road, madam, to your belly which, I do assure you, upon my professional honour, is most grievously inflamed.'

“‘What be I to do for it?’ she asks. ‘To tell ye the truth, doctor, I do be feeling a bit uneasy there.’

“‘Before my time,’ say I, ‘your case would have been hopeless. ’Tis a peculiarity of this disease, which I find most common, that the patient feels no pain till the inflammation reaches the heart. Now, my good woman, you may be swiftly cured by a single application of Doctor Alexander’s stimulating and emollient blistering-plaster. One guinea to the rich; one shilling to the poor; long life for all.’

“Immediately she buys a plaster and goes away home in a mighty bustle; while I pass on to seek another patient. I address myself to women only, for I find them better listeners than their husbands. But as evening approaches I have half the men in the place about me; some sent by their wives, others brought by their ailments; and I am not slow to discover that my pills and plasters will cure them all. If I had but five guineas I would lay them out on plasters and acquire a fortune.”

“Five guineas,” Ruth murmured absently. “That is not much.”

“For the rich man nothing. To the unfortunate who hides from the law——” He broke off, then added sorrowfully, “I perceive I have lost your interest.”

“Do not say so,” she said, rising in some agitation, yet looking away from him and listening. “I believe I too am haunted,” she whispered. These several minutes I seem to have heard from time to time the sound of footsteps.”

“It is not evening yet,” he muttered, also rising.

“I know the master’s step—’tis slow and dragging. This was quick, yet heavy.”

“You are mistaken, dear lady. I hear no sound whatever,” he said encouragingly.

“I know not which way to turn. The doors stand open. . . .”

More she would have said, but that moment came

a knocking which filled the room where they were standing, and passed with solemn echoes through the house.

"Run!" she gasped. "I pray you hide—but do not kill."

"Shall I not stay to protect you?"

"Your discovery ruins us both. Escape into the bushes. You cannot reach the loft—that way is barred."

The knocking had ceased; and now a heavy footstep sounded in the passage. Cay reached for his hat, snatched a knife, and ran.

"The ghost!" Ruth whispered, shrinking back. "But why does he haunt me?"

"Ruth Grambla! Are you within?" a voice called sternly.

"I am here, sir. I am coming," she said faintly, and stepped forward; but, before she could reach the door leading to the back part of the house, a tall dark stranger stood there; and he was clad after the fashion of a Romish priest.

"You were long in answering my knock," he said.

"Sir, I beg your pardon," said Ruth faintly.

"My good maid, I hope you are honest," the priest continued.

"I stay in this house all day alone; I serve my father; I have no other life," she faltered.

"Alone!" cried the priest. "Who is that young man who has just departed from you?"

"I think, sir—I believe, sir, you are deceived," Ruth stammered.

"I believe so indeed; but by you, Ruth Grambla," said the priest more sternly. "I have watched you both from outside this window a long while. He was telling you the story of his life."

"Sir, I will tell you no lies," she cried bravely. "He is a poor gentleman, who has sinned a little, but has suffered much from others. He came here by chance,

starving and exhausted ; I gave him food and shelter. Kind sir, do not tell my father, or I am ruined."

" You are confessing to me, therefore I cannot tell your father. Truth brings a great reward, Ruth Grambla," said the priest gently. " I believe you are honest. I know you have served faithfully a man who has never rewarded you with the least affection. I come to bless your life, and not to curse it. You do not know me ? "

" Sir, I have never seen you before."

" I come to bring you a message, and not to spy upon you. I would have you know, Ruth Grambla, you are not friendless. God has his agents upon earth to help the weak and fatherless. I am to tell you that a friend, more powerful than the meagre Grambla, watches over you. In every community there are men who seek to ruin the lives of others ; but when one who tries to do good—even by the power of magic and enchantment—stands at the head of that community, the evil-doer shall not go too far. I give you peace, child. When you are in need of me I shall come to you. But be not too open with this stranger ; do not offer him too much. For he may yet deceive you."

The mysterious stranger departed by the way he had come ; and Ruth was left alone in the kitchen, standing between firelight and sunshine, with her body also full of light and burning.

CHAPTER X

SIR THOMAS OPENS HIS BOOK

BEZURREL CASTLE stood upon a slight eminence, and from a window of the dining-room, placed at the corner towards the church-town, both avenues leading to the main entrance lay open. While Sir Thomas breakfasted alone, in the foreign style to which he had grown accustomed, he glanced from time to time along the approach ascending from his woodlands; and presently he shook a little bell.

A black man, clothed in white, and looking every inch the servant for a wizard, responded; and his master asked in the terrible language of magicians, which nevertheless the meanest Frenchman might have comprehended, "Is little Twitcher in the kitchen?"

"I believe, your honour, he is walking in the park."

"Bid him confine himself to his room for the present. Two gentleman are about to wait upon me. I desire you to admit them to me here."

Black withdrew, and White leaned his elbows upon the table to watch a pair of loitering figures which were not of one mind; for the taller and weaker seemed inclined to retreat, while the other urged him on, finally locking an arm within his, and using something stronger than persuasion until they felt the eyes of the windows upon them, and then the taller was allowed to go free. At once he dropped behind his champion, and walked like one who suddenly discovered beauty in his boots.

Sir Thomas was satisfied by this unwilling tribute

to his powers, yet the true index to his character expressed contempt.

"A pity," said he, "that men of the country, both small and great, should suffer their souls to be consumed by superstition. Our yeomen are brave in body, but cowards in mind; they will face cold steel without a tremor, yet run from a rustling leaf at night. Brave bodies are the result of centuries given to civil warfare; cowardly minds are the inheritance of ignorance. The countryman lives in the world which God created, but does not see it; for he staggers along a path of his own fancy, lighted by his wild imagination; his body wide awake, his mind just conscious. If the scholar would rule this sleeping congregation, he must descend to cunning and play upon their fears."

The magician ceased his musings, for the door opened, and two gentlemen were announced.

"John Clabar, I am pleased to welcome you. Nay, if you please, I shake hands with Peter first. This son may not wait until his father has been honoured. I am not sorry, sir, you have no son. Your daughter makes amends."

"My friend! The gentleman of the inn!" cried Cherry.

"Whose cloak you mended."

"It was but a poor return," she stammered. "I am bewildered. Sir Thomas, here is my father."

"Why, John Clabar, do you fear me? Come, sir, you are an honest man, and can look one in the face. You and your daughter are welcome to Bezurrel."

"I thank you, Sir Thomas," whispered Clabar.

"Sir, I know your powers. My daughter, sir, did not wish to deceive you. I was assured you would tell her sex before we entered your house. This disguise, sir, is to protect her against our enemy."

"You do not understand, father. Sir Thomas is the kind gentleman who met me upon the road, and invited me to be his guest."

"Nay, I forced you."

"Ah! but there was magic in that too," muttered Clabar.

"My father, sir, has lived alone so long," said she, "that I fear he has forgot his manners."

"Nay, child! I am a Clabar of Coinagehall," the father replied, stepping forward from the wall, against which he had been standing like a full-length portrait. "Sir, our ancestors were friendly. There was a broken place in the hedge where my father would cross to visit yours."

"And that is a high road, John Clabar, which is ever open between son and son," added Sir Thomas, as their hands met.

"Sir, I have not deserved this kindness. Speak for me, Cherry," said Clabar, retreating again towards the wall.

"I speak first for myself," she said. "Sir Thomas, I would have deceived you, but could not; for you set so many traps about me, and I fell into the most womanly of them all. You compelled me to forget my part, and caught me with a needle. I feel no shame at being trapped by you."

"Because I possess a certain power of divination?"

"Indeed, I believe that is true. But did you not also deceive me? Were you not disguised as a stranger whom I might not expect to see again?"

"My disguise was so thin that a question to the innkeeper might have pierced it. I did not tell you my name, for I desired to learn whether you would find the courage to wait upon me here. It is common talk in Moyle that the man or woman who enters Bezurrel must leave in a different form. What say you, John?"

"Sir, that is truth."

"When my father and I depart we shall be different beings," said Cherry. "We shall be happy, and there is as great difference between wretched

and happy people as there is between a man and a brute."

"What is there here which shall make you happy?"

"Your kindness and assistance. I do not fear your voice, Sir Thomas, because I know your heart. Peter beholds a frowning gentleman, but his sister Cherry spies a smiling friend. The gentleman of the inn cannot disguise his real nature by transforming himself into Sir Thomas Just, the lord of Moyle Church-town."

"The traveller may wear a skin which he puts off at home."

"But he cannot change his birth-marks. You promised me friendship; we are both Catholics. You would not wish to break the promise—you could not unless you forswore your faith."

"You have answered well," said Sir Thomas. "Clabar, be proud of your daughter. She was born when the planets were ambitious."

"She came into this world, sir, upon a wild and stormy night, and her life meant death to my poor lady."

"Few lives begin and end with storm," replied Sir Thomas. "It is better to face ill weather on the outward voyage, when the ship is empty, than to be cast upon the rocks returning home, and lose the cargo. You seek my assistance," he went on sharply. "You desire me to raise a storm which shall wreck your enemy, and to find you a harbour where you may safely lie. Will you follow me?"

"It is folly talking," muttered Clabar, as their grave host led the way. "To this man all our thoughts have tongues."

Sir Thomas brought them into the library, a long room somewhat ill-lighted, for the windows were stained glass. As they entered a grey-bearded man poring over a volume rose; he bowed and withdrew, after one searching glance at Cherry's face and figure.

"Father Benedict—my chaplain. A worthy man, and still more worthy priest," explained Sir Thomas.

"Is the chapel near?" asked Cherry eagerly.

"Presently I will lead you there, and show you the private pathway from the garden. Mass is said at eight, and Compline at nine. A place shall be reserved for you."

Clabar shivered at these words which suggested witchcraft to his simple mind; for at such services, he supposed, all manner of unquiet spirits were summoned from their graves. He trembled also before the shelves of dark and terrible books; and when Sir Thomas lifted a great volume upon a desk and opened it with great solemnity, his courage failed entirely, and he would certainly have fled had not Cherry held him.

"Here is a library of rare books; many in the black-letter," said Sir Thomas, noticing Clabar's fear.

"I do not doubt it, sir."

"With much potent magic!"

"Ay, sir, I warrant you."

Sir Thomas appeared to be studying the characters of the book before him. Presently he raised his head and after a glance at Cherry which showed him she was under the same spell as her father—bewildered by the odour of dry books and startled at his conduct—he proceeded to speak slowly:

"Magicians of old have recorded the actions of human lives, so that all we do, or think, or say may be found written and explained in their books of knowledge. Draw near me, John. Consider this character."

"I behold it," whispered Clabar falsely; for he stood three yards away.

"You have been bound to Grambla twenty years—this dark and crooked letter, mark you, stands for that scoundrel. Here I discover the estate of Coinage-hall falling into decay; the rightful owner separated

from it by this cryptic sign, which may reveal a deed got by fraud, or almost any act of villainy."

"I would give a thousand guineas, had I so much, for the eyes to read that book," whispered Clabar.

"Cherry is here implied by this symbol," the sage continued. "It is a sign dominating the whole page. It touches my life here—this mark, you must know, is commonly used to signify a wizard—and here. Ah! what do I see? Here is a sign which baffles me. My lady shall read it, for she is more skilled in this style of letters than myself. Mistress Clabar, I pray you walk warily as Peter, and as Cherry I beg you be most careful; lest you bring trouble on me and upon my house."

"That I will never do," she murmured. "You will tell me what you see."

"As I may only read the stars when the night is clear, so I cannot speak when the text is clouded," said Sir Thomas in the same deep voice. "I warn you, and pass on."

He turned the page, then said with a change of manner, "Why, John, I am sorry to see you are given notice to quit your cottage. You are become a homeless man."

"Sir, this is the business my daughter and I came upon; as, sir, you very well know."

"In the spring of the year birds build their nests; it is the season of home life. I met a wise man once, who told me we are in some measure related to the birds; because, said he, kinship must exist between two-legged creatures. Birds and human beings alike sing in sunshine and are peevish in foul weather. Both wear fine feathers when they go a-courting, both must have a home to protect their young. But we desire a home always, and custom has made one necessary, unless we are birds of prey, like the highwayman, who hovers upon the road to strike his weaker kind. It is written that you come to me in the spring, asking

for materials to build your nest, and a place—here indeed is a tree, but you are not birds—a place in my woods of Bezurrel for your home.”

“I know you are a prophet and a wizard,” cried Cherry. “For you can tell the future and read our secret thoughts.”

“The mind is a great mansion containing many rooms of mystery,” said Sir Thomas, closing the musty volume. “Many men spend their lives in the hall. Few proceed further than the outward rooms. None fully explore their own property. All are sometimes frightened when the doors are opened.”

“Sir, will you tell my future?” asked Cherry boldly.

“The book is closed,” replied the magician. “Consider for a moment. We are happiest when we anticipate, when we make our future, and rely upon the pleasures of imagination. A knowledge of the future would destroy every form of happiness. The mind lives its own life apart; and it lives in a world our bodies cannot enter. You have loved a woman, Clabar. What was the world of wonder your mind then wandered in? A very different land from this where your two bodies suffered. To know the future might be to kill the separate existence of the mind. If the book was lying open by your hand, you would not take it—you could not dare to read.”

“I would take it; but the same moment I might pray for blindness,” Cherry murmured.

“The confession betrays your sex,” replied Sir Thomas. Then he asked, “What is that parcel you are holding?”

“If I answer, sir, I may be wasting breath.”

“You might have done so with less use of breath; for you could have answered with the one word—gold.”

“A small sum, sir, as you know; but the savings of twenty years,” said Clabar.

“Tainted money honourably won. It is a danger

to be carrying that parcel ; for guineas betray themselves by clinking. This jingle is the miser's rhyme, and the call-bell of the robber. You desire me to make an investment for you ? ”

“ We have no home, sir, and can find no place to hide our guineas. Will you take charge of them, and allow my father to draw upon you ? ”

“ If you lend me money, I must pay you interest.”

“ You pay that, sir, already with your kindness.”

“ I will protect your guineas, and my steward shall render you an account. But this is not the matter which you come on. In Moyle you have an enemy, and you seek to hide from him.”

“ Not to hide,” said Cherry, “ but to find a place where we may live in safety. Grambla considers that Coinagehall has now become his lawful property because he has employed my father all these years. He is a religious man, and after this fashion he satisfies his conscience. Now he will strive his utmost to drive us away from Moyle, for we are the last of the Clabars, and with our disappearance his title is established. He evicts my father, in the hope that he may be starved, or compelled into some act of felony which may prove his ruin ; and he will put forth all his energy against me. As a woman I could not stand before him. As a man I must have ground to stand on.”

“ I am the lord of this parish,” said Sir Thomas sternly.

“ True, sir. But Grambla has the influence which you do not exert. If we do not live upon your land he must defeat us.”

“ How can you hope to defeat him ? For he possesses a legal right to Coinagehall. A title founded upon fraud is still a title.”

“ It can be shaken by the will of heaven.”

“ Or abandoned by the owner ? ”

“ Nay, sir ! ” said Clabar respectfully.

"Not at the voice of conscience?"

"I believe not, sir."

"I tell you it may. Permit a man to indulge freely in his passions, and he will kill himself. Reproach him every day, and in time he listens. Force him to listen, and he must be shaken. If every parishioner of Moyle called Grambla robber, he would not listen. Were his own conscience to call him rogue, he might believe it true. You desire a home beneath my protection?"

"We turned aside as we came into your woodlands," began Cherry.

"Sir, we had no right there," Clabar faltered.

"Perhaps you hardly know how fair the place is," she continued. "The woods are very thick and descend into sweet depths. A stream passes through, and its banks are now bright with primroses."

"It is true I know little of Bezurrel Woods."

"There will soon be a summer's sky and warm nights; and while they last we might build and burrow. Sir, we have a little money, and it is already in your keeping. Will you grant us a small piece of your woodland, and take what rent seems to you right? We can raise some shelter. And we shall do no damage, sir; we shall not trap bird or beast, nor destroy a single tree. Bezurrel Woods are full of song and blossom; and there, sir, we might play happily at life."

"Through winter and wild weather, my child?"

"Why not, sir? We may forget our bodies, and live with our minds."

"In poverty, child?"

"The poor laugh more merrily than the rich, for they fear no losses."

"You would face the realities of existence, and seek to prove them false."

"The realities of existence, sir, are love, mercy, knowledge, for the mind; food to eat and clothes to wear for the body. I cannot prove to be false what

God made real ; nor would I try. We make life a tragedy by turning our back upon realities, not by accepting them. I believe, sir, men and women are only true to themselves when they meet in the open air."

"Would you invite them then to remain with their comrades the birds ?"

"Why no, sir," said Cherry firmly. "But I would ask them not to wipe off Nature on the doormat. God never created houses ; therefore we may be terrified to lie in one. But flowers and trees do not frighten us because God made them."

"Do you not go in terror of your fellow-creatures ?"

"Because of the false realities of the devil in them, sir."

"You have read many books, Cherry ?"

"Not so many as I could wish to read."

"And have read them wrongly," proceeded Sir Thomas. "You would jest at life because you are still young. You would make a sport of living because your heart is free, and your mind has not been clouded yet by sorrow. Love, mercy, knowledge are great realities indeed ; but will surround us with all the suffering that the mind can bear. Happiest love must one day feel the wound of separation ; tenderest mercy know the worst ingratitude ; every avenue of knowledge end in ignorance."

"I would not jest at life, Sir Thomas. I would make it real with happiness," she answered. "I believe many people leave a way open to sorrow. Nay more, they prepare it with every possible diligence, and say to themselves, 'here is sorrow's pathway.' They look along it every morning of their lives, and wonder when sorrow will be coming, and why sorrow is not yet in sight. Sir, they force themselves into a state of misery, and then blame God for it. But I would make a broad highway for happiness, and if sorrow should chance to come near, I would go out and cry, 'No way!'

no way! You shall not walk along this road of happiness."

"Very well indeed," Sir Thomas murmured, glancing in some wonder at the dark and silent form of Clabar.

"Life would be real in Bezurrel Woods among the birds and flowers," she added.

"Sickness and death, child!"

"Not realities, for the devil brought them. If my father died, I should weep indeed, but not for long; I would not open sorrow's pathway. And if I caught the small-pox, I would say to my body, 'lie you there and recover,' and would go for a happy holiday to my mind."

"Youth, not wisdom, speaking," Sir Thomas muttered.

"That is true, sir. My tongue is joined to my heart, not to my brain. I would rather live by my heart, than by all the wisdom of the world. I would make home with my heart, and were I queen, sir, I would rule the people with my heart. In Bezurrel Woods is a pathway along which you permit parishioners to walk; but I would allow no one to enter by my gate if they brought sorrow on their faces. I would tell them a smile is lighter than a frown, and indeed it suits you better. Therefore take up your smile here and carry it."

"What if they could not be happy?"

"It would be my business to teach them."

"And suppose they could not learn?"

"Sir, there was never a man nor woman born who could not learn the simple task of knowing happiness. 'Tis true there may be many unwilling to learn, and many more who have not found a teacher. Sir, if one man in a crowd bursts into laughter, all the sour faces will laugh to see his mirth; he who laughs is the master. But if he should bid the sour faces to laugh, they would tell him to mind his business. God created

happiness as an act of worship to Himself ; but when the devil also attempted to create happiness it turned into sorrow. Sir, melancholy is the worship of the devil, and I'll have none of it."

"The brain is there," said Sir Thomas. Then he turned to the silent Clabar and went on. "Go with your daughter, and choose that part of Bezurrel Woods where you would wish to live. Inform the steward, and leave the rest to me. Do nothing yourselves and, after choosing the site, go not into the woods until I give you leave. Four days ! Well, much may be done in four spring days. There is an old spell I heard of in the East which lightens a mason's labour admirably. At the proper time I shall send for you. No words, Cherry, for I see your tongue wishes to be pert ; and in that mood I might not love you. Lay the parcel of guineas upon this table. You will pardon me, but I have much to see to," he said, going towards a door which admitted to the garden, then turning to ring a bell.

"Wait outside until I can send Father Benedict to join you, and he will guide you to the chapel. This is a day which marks a period. My sons have finished their education at Oxford and are returning home. Farewell, honest John Clabar. Cherry—do not forget my warning."

CHAPTER XI

RUTH COMES TO THE END OF HER CAPTIVITY

RUTH and her doctor stood in the copse below Coinagehall, while evening crept along, brightening the primroses which were dull in sunlight. The atmosphere was sullen, yet warm, and the impatient March searched every nook to find a living thing.

"Nobody will come this way before dark, unless it be Toby Penrice, and him you can hide from behind these holly-bushes," said Ruth.

"The rogue has seen me once, and has since talked of me at every doorstep."

"As another apparition. Moyle is haunted by all manner of ghosts. Your presence here is known, but to Grambla you are Red Cap, to the Clabars one of their ancestors, while to gossips you are the evil one himself."

"And to you, Ruth?" he asked, holding both her hands.

"To me," she murmured. "What but a dear sinner who is about to leave me? You are the spirit of this season which comes to mock the wretched."

"What do you mean, my Ruth?"

"Spring comes to every youth and maiden, commanding them to love, and they must obey; but those who are poor and in misery love in vain. So the season is a mockery to them. They are bidden go to church, but when they get there the door is locked. Spring, like the world, was made for rich folk."

"I shall not play the part of a deceiving season. I am yours eternally, dear Ruth."

"You heard the gale and the rain last night. In my dreams you were the wind of March, while I was weeping April. You had blown past, and while I smiled at your memory I wept to know that you were gone."

"Could you forget May-day had to follow?"

"I awoke," said Ruth sadly. "There was no May for me."

"You cannot hinder it from coming. Yesterday I knew you loved me——"

"I did not say so."

"When a maiden makes no answer, she means yes."

"I protested."

"Yet you did not resist."

"Surely I forced you from me!"

"And with the action drew yourself towards me."

"And called out!"

"Nay, you sighed and placed your head upon this shoulder. Ah, dearest Ruth!"

"I must leave you," she murmured. "Grambla may have returned home—is calling for me now. This little wood has changed. Now when I walk I shall hear your voice. I shall speak to the trees and flowers, and they will answer—you! The sun will smile of you. The stream and these meadows will have a voice also, and will whisper—you!"

"I leave you, but we do not part," said the young mountebank. "You will be walking at my side; I shall hear your voice and feel your hand stealing into mine. Every day I shall seek your advice, and when a little good fortune comes I shall say, 'Was not that well done, Ruthie?'"

"And I shall answer, 'This brings the summer on.' Is it growing dark? I cannot see."

"There is light here—light upon your hair, and these two little ears shine brightly."

"Oh, love—love in poverty!" she moaned. "Youths and maidens have so little, while the earth is rich."

"We are forced to get and take. We are not allowed happiness until we are exhausted by the struggle to keep alive. Man fights while the maiden waits."

"She was never made for waiting. If she were meant to wait God would have made her differently, and He would have created a different world for her to wait in. This spring season mocks the wretched, but it also teaches them time must not be wasted, not a day, not an hour. We are made so wonderfully, yet how little we are given—a few years of youth in one short life! And if we lose one hour we may miss all. The trees do not wait; birds and beasts do not wait. Buds are opening all around us, birds are mating, every living thing is seizing the great chance which comes every year. Men and maids alone are waiting—waiting!"

"There are no poor trees, poor buds; all are wealthy. They hold all things in common, and each takes a share," he answered heavily. "But poor men and maids must fight for years, and then not obtain their share of good things."

"Fields, woods, and houses are owned by Sir Thomas Just. He takes the shares of hundreds, while you have nothing—and I have not even a name. The poor are forced to steal."

"My Ruthie is no robber."

"What can I give you?" she cried, breaking away from him. "I cannot let you depart from me with empty hands. You honour me, sir, with your love."

"You give me yours."

"I have no fortune—a kitchen-wench, a scrubber of floors! My love by custom goes to the kind gentleman who deigns to smile upon me; and my hand to some dull labourer. Yet you would make me your wife in sight of heaven."

"Have you not saved my life? I loved you out of

gratitude, I loved you out of pity; and at last I loved you for yourself alone."

"Take these!" cried Ruth, forcing primroses into his hands. "They are not mine to give, yet what else is there? Take these also!" she continued, plucking the tall daffodils. "Here is a ribbon from my neck. And here is a handkerchief. Now I have given you all I can. Nay, here are kisses!" And she flung herself upon him, weeping wildly.

"Dear heart, what ails you?" he whispered.

"My master shall not say his servant has no dowry," she sobbed. "I give you yellow flowers, the first of the year. See! I thrust them into your pocket, and bid them turn into gold. Hear the petals clink together!"

"Ruth! dear Ruth, be calm!"

"By all the fields of Coinagehall you shall carry them with you. Four days ago we met—both starving. I gave you food, and in return you fed me with your kindness and your presence—and yesterday with the only food that satisfies a woman."

"Kisses, sweetheart; soft words, promises, oaths."

"Food of heaven, satisfying only while the sweet taste remains, then leaving the body more hungry than before. Would you turn deceiver—poisoner? For the man who falsely swears to love poisons the wells of heaven. Ah, I do not know what I am saying. Pardon me, dearest poor gentleman! You have given me so much—burdened me with memories which shall aid my feet to run up hill. Shall some village woman give you a shilling, while I send you away empty-handed?"

"I have your heart to carry, and your love to hold. You give me all," he said. "Dearest Ruth, do not weaken me. I must go to win our future. Force me from you—do not hold me here. If I move I draw you with me."

"My will forces you away, but my heart is a bramble clinging round you."

"This flower has no thorns," he whispered as he kissed her streaming face.

"Love wears a crown of thorns."

"It is almost night," he cried. "Oh, Ruth, Ruth! what a darkness is this! Each path as I turn towards it seems blacker than the last. A man is valiant when life has no pleasure for him; a craven when he loves. The trees are full of voices. There are movements in yonder bushes as of men lying in wait. More flowers, Ruth! Foolish Ruth!"

"The handkerchief!" she cried.

"Why, it is tied at the four corners."

"True lover's knots."

"It holds something. What are you giving me? What more can you give?"

"See! I force it into the pocket of your coat. It lies upon a bed of primroses. Be very careful how you draw it out—but not now. Walk through the night, and in the morning ask God to bless you—and to forgive us both—then draw out my yellow flowers, my stolen blossoms, and count them. Go, Harry! That way to the east."

"I have indeed taught you to call me by that name," he said hoarsely. "'Tis the name by which my few friends know me. But I have not told you how they call me sometimes Black Harry."

"I care nothing for a name. Am I not Black Ruth of the kitchen?"

"I am so called——"

"Run, Harry!" she cried, not hearing what he said. "My senses are going from me. The moon is silver, and the sun is gold. We are all dark creatures. Let us wish for each other names of a better colour. Good night, Harry—I believe I have said good-bye."

She turned and went, stumbling against the holly-bushes.

"Ruth, stay!"

"Be careful, Harry, to wrap your cloak about you ; for the air will be very cold near morning."

"Hear me, Ruth ! I am unworthy of your love. Ruth, my love, my life ! How shall we meet again !"

But he spoke to the night, for Ruth was already in the open field ; and his voice was a buzzing in her ears.

Job Cay ran from the copse until he reached the silent lane, and along this he sped to an open hill where the fresh wind whistled. He drew out the handkerchief and untied the knots. Five guineas there, the sum he had asked for, and now had won by lying. He stood and stared at them, swaying from side to side. Stones were beneath his feet ; he knelt upon them, and took off his hat ; but could not pray. The only words which escaped into the wind were, "If I forget her yellow flowers, God wound me !"

Ruth made her way to Coinagehall, and no thought of the waiting Jacob hurried her ; for her senses were stupefied again. She reached the house, hearing no sound except the cry of owls, and pushed at the door, which opened with a grating noise, for wind had scattered sand upon the floor. A dull light of candles fell upon her eyes ; she felt the smart of them when it was too late to turn ; for the kitchen stood open at the end of the passage, and she saw Jacob, a small dark creature—far away it seemed to her—crouched upon his usual chair, watching and waiting. Ruth faltered, then stood still ; for the picture of light and lawyer swung before her, and she found herself wondering whether any woman could be bought with gold to kiss that meagre face.

Jacob moved like a shadow, and passed into the dark. He called, and the girl recovered her own voice at the sound of his.

"Ah, he is frightened," she murmured.

"Where have you been ?"

"Walking in the copse and through the meadows," she replied; but that sorrowful tongue gave evidence against her.

"It is night."

"I call it evening. It is night here."

"Come nearer. I am told a woman can lie cleverly," said Jacob.

He took a candlestick, and held it towards her face. Hardly knowing what she did Ruth extinguished the flame. Smoke of the snuff ascended between them, while Jacob laughed. Ruth had never heard him laugh so merrily. But his tongue was soon grating like the door upon the sand.

"Very well! Now stretch your cheeks and blow me out that firelight. Stretch them again and blow me from the house. What, have ye spent all breath already? Here is a woman's strength! She blows out a candle, and is then exhausted."

"I am not well. My head is aching."

"Ay, and the heart too, I warrant."

"So I went down into the copse, forgetting it grew late; and the darkness came upon me suddenly."

"Stand here before me. I will examine you—ay, know you thoroughly. All day you might have wandered, yet you choose the evening. Ruth Grambla—I know not why I honour you with my name—we men of the law regard the faces of our clients, and especially do we regard the eyes and mouth. The rascal, if a man, will blunder through his story, and while he speaks the truth his eyes are steady; but at the first lie they change, they flicker like this candle flame. If a woman, she will use her tongue exceeding well; but coming to the lie her mouth twitches. Nay, girl, stand steady. Would you plead guilty with your attitude? So! so! an honest wench, a virtuous woman. Your eyes are red with weeping."

"I have suffered much pain," she whispered.

"Your hair is in great disorder."

"It was blown by the wind."

"And to conclude you have a lover."

Ruth did not answer.

"His name is Peter Clabar."

"I do not know him."

"She speaks the truth," muttered Jacob. "This lover is then a stranger," he proceeded. "I would know his name."

Ruth smiled faintly, then shook her head.

"Where and how did you meet this man?"

"I may have my own secret," said Ruth firmly. "I have served you well, and have not sought to learn the secrets of your life. Now I may begin to live myself."

"To-morrow you shall answer me," said Jacob calmly.

He said nothing more, and presently withdrew to his room, leaving Ruth to reproach herself for the weakness which had detained her in the copse so long. Her work was finished, and she sat before the dying fire; a sad and silent little figure, thinking of the lonely wanderer upon the downs with his face towards the hopeful east. She slept, and from a vision of the darkest future, awoke to behold Jacob standing on the threshold, terrible in his insignificance. His face was distorted, his eyes were wild, and his fingers plucked at the air as though trying to clutch some elusive property. With a thrill of terror Ruth started up and snuffed the candle.

"You know John Clabar?" said Jacob at last.

"He is not my lover," she answered impatiently, yet with a carelessness she had not shown before.

"This house was once the property of his family. I took him into my service out of charity; the dreaming fool sat in my office and sighed for better days. He would have groaned me out of charity with all men. So I dismissed him—gave him notice to quit his cottage. I took you also out of charity, and now

you—you defy me. Remember John Clabar, who to-morrow will be homeless. To-morrow by the will of God this family of Clabar takes another downward step—the last.”

Ruth did not sleep that night. In the morning Jacob departed long before his usual time ; but an hour later he crossed the fields, returning to Coinagehall in the company of the village constable, and a farmer with his dog. All three entered the house and ascended the stairs ; while Ruth sat in the kitchen, her face buried in her hands, for she had seen the constable holding a stick she recognised.

The search-party descended and left the house, the dog straining at its leash. Ruth heard the tramping of feet upon the gravel, approaching the back, then dying away in the direction of the coach-house. A long silence followed before the searchers returned ; and at last Ruth saw the constable and farmer retreating across the fields, and she heard a stealthy footstep in the passage.

Jacob came in rubbing his hands and smiling at the face of the lying clock ; in good humour for he played a game which suited his mood, and he was also vastly relieved to know the apparition, which had failed to trouble him of late, had never found its way to Coinagehall.

“ Ah, Ruth, 'tis not often I bring visitors. I am a man of method. To change the order of the day is to break all business. You have a lover. That fact was established between us yesterday,” he said with a joyous cackling of laughter. “ Maidens will love—'tis right that they should. A sad life without love ! But while lovers kiss and sigh, the man of business takes their land and houses. Here is the will of God, I doubt not. You and your lover shall meet again. I will bring him back, or perchance send you to him. Yet I would rather bring him back, so that I might restore you to his arms.”

"Judge me harshly if you will," said Ruth. "But do not jeer at me."

"I shall enjoy my humour. I too have been walking in the copse, though my eyes are not red with weeping. The distressed lover departed, leaving his stick. The scent was sufficient for the hound, which traced the precious rascal to this house, so into the best room upstairs, and then into the loft. These four days, maiden—nay, I should call you woman—you have disported yourself very pleasantly, I warrant. You go out upon the road, you find your gentleman, and, being a passable maid, he succumbs to your temptation. You bring him into my house, offer him my bed, give him my food. Nay, in your exceeding generosity, you must even pay him for the kindness he has rendered a sly kitchen-wench, so you must break open my box, steal five of my guineas, and press them upon him."

"It is true I took the money. I did not break the box, for you had left the key to tempt me," said Ruth, holding her hands a moment upon her ears.

"Robbery, wench! 'Tis the only word to fit your crime; and, mark you, robbery goes ever hand in hand with the profession I think you not unsuited for."

"You will pardon me," she said, "but I remain so ignorant of the world, I have retained some innocence. You call me robber; until to-day I have been charged to call you father, though all my life you have used me as a servant. The daughter may have access to the father's purse; the servant may look to her master for fair wages. I have taken from you five guineas. How many years of life have you stolen from me?"

"I see you would be pleasant," said the little man, twisting his fingers together until they cracked like parchment. "Stealing a year of life is a very good pleasantry indeed—a very pretty image of speech. I believe you will not better it."

"You speak of a profession you have discovered for

me," continued the patient girl; but could say no more, for Jacob broke into a passion of cackling laughter which bent him double.

"She has done better," he cried at length. "The woman is an antic—would make a strolling player. There is but one profession open to a woman, and that in your innocence you have discovered for yourself."

"Then my ignorance and innocence are equal."

"This modesty will go down well. 'Twill be the making of you. Chut, wench! you grow tedious. To go out upon the road and smile at men; to bring them home, give them food and drink; to hide them in bedchambers; to call them lovers—what is all this but——"

"Stay!" cried Ruth so violently that Jacob shuffled back. "Now I understand your meaning. Utter that word, and I shall—I shall try to kill you. I do not pollute my tongue by telling you my love-story. Oh, God in heaven, they think me—they will call me . . ."

She turned to the wall and sobbed against it, "Oh, my father and mother, why are ye dead? Will ye not come back to save me?"

"This is penitence—remorse," said Jacob, smiling and nodding. "God is merciful to sinners, yet 'tis our duty to put them from us. One evil person contaminates the whole community. I like to hear this woman weeping. 'Tis a sign some goodness is remaining—if it be not anger. I fear she would have shed no tear had we not caught her."

His amiable voice was nothing but a noise in the ears of Ruth. She leaned against the wall and stammered like a child, till it was pitiful to hear her. "Last night I shed tears for love. Now I shed tears for shame. Oh, for a little strength! I cannot turn upon him. When I look at him I feel sick, I grow faint. Now I am quite blind."

"An honourable house," said Jacob, taking snuff.

"For centuries the home of English yeomen. Now by this woman become a place of ill-repute. Generations to come will tell of it. At such a time there dwelt in this house an unworthy woman, a shameless woman, ay, a vile woman. So they will say, and add a name I would not like to call her. Breaking open my box, stealing my guineas—this is a hanging matter. I might carry her before the magistrates, I might charge her with theft, ay, and with making my house, this honourable mansion of Coinagehall, a resort for gal-lants. But I shall be merciful, ay, and temper justice with my mercy. The woman shall enjoy her liberty."

He skipped to the windows and fastened them; then to the back door which he locked; and afterwards returning to the kitchen, then standing for a few moments to watch the girl who seemed to have forgotten he was near.

"A good day," he muttered, rubbing his hands contentedly. "John Clabar and his baby-faced youth are to go into the fields and woods—if any person gives them lodging I will know the reason. And Ruth Grambla—Grambla a good and decent name—shall make her choice,"

Briskly he stepped to the unhappy Ruth and tapped her shoulder. When she did not respond he drew her round.

"Ruth Grambla, I pray you give me your attention. You have passed under my name before the parish, and upon condition I shall allow you to retain it. You have stolen my guineas, but upon terms I propose to pardon you. Give me your hand, and all shall be well."

His meaning, rather than the words, reached Ruth, and made her stagger. She could not speak; besides, she scorned to answer. This man, who had tortured her, and believed she had lately been dishonouring his house, now asked her to be his wife, in order that she might end her life as she had begun it, by toiling in his kitchen.

"The love of a father I have never lavished upon you," Jacob continued, tapping his dirty snuff-box. "Now I perceive you are arrived at the age when love becomes as the sun of your existence; and I propose to honour you—for 'tis indeed an honour to a nameless wench—with a partnership—a business one, I grant ye—not in my office, but in my house of Coinagehall."

"You!" sobbed Ruth, seeing the face and eyes of handsome Harry, and feeling his late kisses burn upon her. Then she threw out her arms, and cried in anguish, "Kill me, or let me go."

"I am sorry the proposal does not suit you," said Jacob lightly. "I feared it would be so. Yet I was bound by honour and duty—a trifle by my inclination also—to give you the choice between honest living and a shameful ending. What cannot be mended by marriage must now be ended by dismissal. The clothes you wear I bestow upon you as a free gift. Had you been honest I would have pressed a guinea in your hand; for you have not served me ill. I will even escort you to the road, and point out the way you should proceed for Plymouth town, where I am told a wench with a fair face may find a handsome living. You will follow me."

Ruth staggered against the table, while her dim eyes saw in a mist the fire she had made, the pots she had scoured a thousand times; and her ears heard at a great distance the wheezing of the clock, her lifelong comrade. She had not strength to move; but Jacob, with a chuckle of satisfaction, put his hands upon her, and dragged her from the room. In the hall she fell; and the little attorney, losing control of his temper at last, kicked and struck her till his limbs were weary.

"Robber!" he shouted. "Mistress of gallants! You steal my guineas! You make a brothel of my house! You scorn my name—sneer at my figure—mock at my face!"

Then he seized her by the feet and dragged her over the stones, and left her upon the grass outside, while he locked the door.

"Hear my last word, strumpet!" he shouted, returning and bending over her swollen eyes and bleeding mouth. "Get you gone from here, and never let me see your face again. Get you gone from Moyle, for if I find you in this parish I carry you before the magistrates. Get you to your lover, and I pray to know you have been hanged together."

He shuffled away, muttering threats, glancing back every few yards at the slight figure, clad in its coarse working clothes, lying barely conscious and moaning in its pain.

CHAPTER XII

THE ADVENTURES OF RUTH IN FAIRYLAND

As Ruth could not read she knew but a few magic tales, and these had been told her by the old woman of the farm, who had seen fairies in her young days ; she thought upon Poldrifty Downs, but was not certain. Ruth dreamed of such tales as the procession of the senses approaching her body, still lying in the garden of Coinagehall.

A fine sight it would have been to those whose eyes had been struck with magic ointment. First came the tales, each one beneath its banner, and with its band of music. The motto of every one was clearly visible : ' The true bride finds her own love ' ; ' The virtuous maiden must win the prize ' ; ' You are immortal when you believe in yourself.' And every tale, as it passed, dropped a herb of healing. Then came the chariot of the sun, surrounded by rainbows. The warmth was soothing ; it remained after the vision had gone by, to be replaced by the flowers ; primroses, daffodils, and many others, skipping along like children ; the buds somewhat peevish because they could not see. And upon their petals pressed birds, butterflies, and bees, with quite wise faces. Last of all came the five senses hand in hand.

But Ruth had to sit upon the grass and wait an hour for the straggler strength. It arrived at last, the only dejected creature of them all—the others had been somewhat too boisterous—but it consented to lift Ruth from the weeds and to allow her to follow the procession, which had entirely disappeared, and indeed

now seemed to have been nothing but a fancy, out of the garden, across the fields, and along the lane towards the high and wind-swept country.

Ruth knew she would not be safe until she had passed the great longstone which marked the boundary of the parish ; but all beyond that was a land of the barbarians. She had never been away from Moyle, and that stone was to her the end of the known world. She had bruises and weakness in place of friends and home ; she was not able to walk a dozen miles, and even if she had walked twenty, what would she have found except more open spaces and unfriendly faces ?

"I must beg for my food," she whispered. "Else go down to the sea and sup upon gweans and limpets. But if I go to the sea I may not return."

Hope, like a tiny child, kept singing while her feet went on. Ruth had in mind two very different figures. One was the mysterious priest who had walked into Coinagehall, had blessed her in a kindly voice, and promised her protection. She knew a priest lived at Bezurrel, but he would not interest himself in the Protestants of Moyle, nor would Sir Thomas allow him to enter a home unbidden. Many ships were driven by contrary winds into the harbours ; sailors and passengers would explore the land, obtain provisions, then go upon their way. This priest was undoubtedly a foreigner thus stranded, roaming about the parish for an hour, full of love for his fellow-creatures. Ruth dismissed this figure with a sigh.

The other was an old woman with a beard ; her figure, if less distinct, was much more real ; although Ruth could not feel confident of help, for Mother Gothel was the attorney's trusted seer. She was also one of the wisest women in all Cornwall. Ruth had never spoken to the witch, whose powers she believed in firmly ; but Mother Gothel, it was rumoured, had a kindness for maidens—having at some remote period

been one herself—therefore she might tell the homeless girl which path it would be best for her to choose.

Ruth came out upon the broken trackway, where she had never walked before, though barely a mile from Coinagehall. Looking back she saw the roofs of Moyle, and her courage died away.

“I have a mind to go back,” she murmured, beginning to weep again. “I loved my kitchen, the shining pots, the dear old clock. I had no other company. Once I took in a starving cat, but he kicked it to death. Then I took in a starving man, and he tried to kick me to death. I would go back if—nay, he was tormenting me; and rather than that I would go down to the sea. The poor old clock will have no comrade now.”

She went on until she could see smoke curling over the brow of the hill, then she wiped away her tears and whispered, “How silent it must be! The spiders are spinning new webs. The mice are running about the kitchen. The fire has gone out. I remember my apron was hanging over the back of that chair. I am sorry I had not time to sweep the floor.”

In fine weather Mother Gothel made her fire among some stones before the hovel. She was squatting upon the peat, presiding over a broth of some fell description, looking terrible to the eyes of Ruth; for she was swarthy, and muttered to herself. The girl stopped in terror several yards away; but the wise woman turned her head, and fixed her simple old eyes, which sorely needed a pair of spectacles, upon the faltering figure; and then she scrambled up and called in a motherly fashion, “La, my dear Ruth! I never thought to see you in the high country. I ha’ known you all your life, but ha’ never spoke with ye avore. Come along up, my dear. Come, my pretty! Pitch by the fire and tell to old mother.”

“I am afraid of you, Mother Gothel,” said Ruth simply.

“Don’t ye be frightened, child. Sit here, on this

mossy stone, and if the old cat comes to rub agin ye, cry scat to 'en. And don't ye be shamed, for all Moyle be afraid of me, and Master Grambla most of all. The fox-hunters draw over to Gwentor sooner than pass my cottage. I'm a quiet old woman when the sun shines ; but at night I be the powerfulllest old witch between Land's End and Tamar. I ha' brought storms without number, and I ha' put golden fortunes into the pockets of the wreckers. And once when the full moon warn't to my liking I put 'en out. La, my dear, I puffed wi' my old cheeks just once, and out her went."

" You won't hurt me, Mother Gothall ? "

" Not if Master Grambla was to give me a bag of guineas for it. Not if he was to say change the maid into a toad. I wouldn't change ye, my love, and if I did I would change ye into a little bird to hang up in a cage and sing for me. I love young folks, and the prettier they be the more I loves them ; for I was a pretty maid myself, and a wonderful fine woman afore I took to witchery. I was the prettiest maid between Land's End and Tamar, and now I be the old witch of Poldrifty Downs, and nobody 'cept Sir Thomas Just is powerfuller than I be."

For several minutes the old body continued her professional patter, which kept Ruth quaking ; while the pot went on boiling, and the brindled cat stalked among the rocks, and the tame raven croaked. Mother Gothall threw turves upon the fire, muttering an incantation to make them burn. Then she looked into the clear water of the spring, and said wisely, " I see, my dear, you ain't come up alone."

" Yes, Mother Gothall. I am quite alone now."

" You bain't, my dear. You ha' brought trouble along with ye."

Ruth bowed her head and quickly told the story, from the coming of Job Cay to the final scene that morning ; concluding with the sad saying, " I have

only one friend, and he cannot help me. I have no place where I can lie to-night. And I can get no food unless I beg for it."

"Jacob Grambla," mumbled the witch. "Ah, Jacob Grambla! Feel that, my beauty!" And she spat into the fire.

"Will you tell me which way I am to go? And will you tell me the future, dear Mother Gothel?"

"I'll tell ye," said the witch gruffly, staring at the sad little figure. "Cast out, be ye?" she went on. "Did ye mind to walk along the road full of sailors and robbers—a pretty maid like you? He would ha' done kinder to ha' killed ye. Takes a man to turn a poor maid into the road. The devil couldn't do it. The devil would ha' give ye fine clothes, and a purse of gold, and a coach and four to drive in. Takes a man to learn the devil how to use maidens. Keep a good heart, my love. Master Grambla will burn. He'll burn fine."

"I am so glad I came," Ruth murmured.

"You crave to know the future," cried Mother Gothel, stirring the pot vigorously. "What do you know about the past?"

"Can you tell me that?" said Ruth eagerly. "I am just a maiden—that is all. A maiden alone in the world without a name. A few days ago Mr. Grambla informed me I am not his daughter. He declared my mother was a witch."

"A witch, bless her soul! He'd call the angels witches. Your mother was the beautifulest woman I ever saw."

"You saw her!" cried Ruth, coming excitedly to the dame, forgetting witchcraft and her own condition.

"Oh, Mother Gothel, tell me of my mother."

"La, child, I knows but little, for the poor dear lady was dead when I saw her, and lying cold upon the sand. 'Tis twenty years ago—I mind the time well, for 'twas soon after Cherry Clabar was born—

scat my old fool of a tongue, what be it telling of ! I mean Peter Clabar, and I was minding the baby. 'Twas a fearful stormy season, and folks said I had brought the wind—mebbe I did, but that's no matter—and one night a boat was cast upon the rocks. It came from a ship what had gone down. 'Tis an old story I'm telling, for ships are cast upon this shore in every gale, and the richest folk about here are the wreckers."

"And my mother was in that boat !"

"And you too. She was holding you to her bosom. You and her were the only ones what got to shore alive, and she died without speaking—least I says so, but how be I to know ? For she was found by Master Grambla."

"She may have spoken to him. Why do I remember nothing ?"

"You was nought but a little babe. If Master Grambla knows aught about ye, he'll keep it to himself. I was called to lay the poor lady out for burial—aw, she was a lovely creature—and I took her clothes, my dear, I wore your dear mother's gown till it fell to pieces. And I found on her neck a little trinket—such as a child might wear on fair-day—and I have it yet. I fancy, my love, you would like to see it."

"Oh, Mother Gothel !" Ruth gasped.

The old woman went into the hovel and rummaged for many long minutes. She returned at last and gave Ruth the dainty necklace, which flashed prettily in the sunshine, saying kindly, "I'd like you to keep it, dear. 'Tis of no value, else Master Grambla would ha' took it from her. I had a mind to give it you before, but Master Grambla would ha' seen it, and took it from you, and accused me of stealing it. Keep it, dear, and put it under your pillow, and then you will dream of your dear lady mother."

Ruth pressed the trinket to her lips, then threw her arms round the old dame's neck and kissed her, fearing the witch's skin no longer ; while tears came into Mother Gothel's eyes when she felt those kisses.

"I'll serve ye, dear. I'll fetch ye down a pretty future," she promised. "Ay, I'll ride up to the moon and bring it down; for happy marriages be made in the moon, dear, and she be now lying on her back atop of Gwentor. I be a duddy old woman, but I knows how to get the pretty future. I'll give ye a bit of rosemary to wear in your bonnet, so that them down under can't come near ye. And some day I'll go with ye to churchyard and show ye the dear lady's grave."

"You forget, Mother. I must get away from Moyle; and I have neither bed nor pillow."

"La, my pretty, you trust old Mother. Her could change them rocks into four-posted beds and feather pillows wi' a word and a spit. Nothing's no trouble to an old witch body. Do ye pitch here and take a sup o' broth, while I gets me away to find the future."

She ran into the hovel for a bowl, which she filled from the pot, and then forced into the girl's hands, saying, "'Tis brave wholesome broth, dear, and will put new heart into ye. Now I'm agoing to leave you, and don't ye fret while I be gone. Here's my old broomstick—don't ye touch 'en, dear, for he'm that powerful he would fly away with ye, and drop ye down in the Red Say. He be that spiteful, I can't hardly manage him myself."

"Where are you going?" asked the bewildered girl.

"Up to the moon, my dear. I won't go off before your eyes, lest I should fright ye to death; for I gets monstrous ugly when I sits across the broomstick. I'll walk down the track, and directly I goes behind them rocks I shall vanish out of your sight. You won't see nothing at all, my dear. You bide here and sup your broth, and you'll see me walking out of them rocks soon, just as natural as I be now. And 'twill be to you as if I hadn't gone more than a dozen yards away from ye."

Mother Gothall trotted off, holding the fearful broomstick at arm's length, and addressing it in an unknown

tongue. She had not overrated her powers, for she vanished immediately after passing behind the great pile of rocks. While Ruth trembled at this exhibition of witchcraft, but did not forget to take the broth, which was well seasoned with honest vegetables; and she even found courage to stroke the brindled cat, and to offer it the dregs in the bowl; and was delighted when the animal behaved like any other cat, arching her back, purring, and showing no signs of her supernatural origin. Decidedly, thought Ruth, there were worse places in Moyle than this open-air kitchen of the witch.

Progress in those days was slow, yet hardly had twenty minutes passed before Mother Gothel returned, not in the least fatigued, although in that brief period she had flown to the moon and back. She flung down the broomstick disdainfully, and cried, "Now you can touch 'en—ay, do anything with 'en you've a mind to, for he'm that tired and out o' breath he couldn't fly with ye a yard."

"Have you really been to the moon, Mother Gothel?" asked Ruth, staring at the wonderful dame with childish eyes.

"Don't talk about it, dear. I hates the old moon. 'Tis a nasty cold country up there, and I always gets a sore throat after going up. And the old gentleman of the moon—him with the faggot and dog and lantern—he'm that peevish sometimes there's no getting a decent word out of him. I don't know of anything what upsets me more than going up to the moon."

"It is very kind to take so much trouble for me."

"The trouble's nought. 'Tis the rudeness of the old gentleman, and the snarls of his nasty little dog, and the cold winds, what upset me. The little dog always tries to bite me, and I don't dare give he one wi' the broomstick; for you see, dear, that might make the old gentleman more peevish than ever."

"Do you know my future now, Mother Gothel?"

"La, my pretty, I knows everything. But I ain't allowed to tell ye much."

"Which way must I walk?"

The old woman leaned against a rock and closed her eyes. For several moments she remained silent, and then began to speak in her gruff, professional voice:

"You will go down the trackway by which you came here. You will turn to the left, and follow the pathway leading towards Gwentor."

"I know it," Ruth murmured.

"You will walk along it until it comes out into the lane. Then you will go along the lane to the left, up the hill, and do not stop until you reach a place where four roads meet."

"I have never been there," Ruth whispered.

"There is a stone upon the grass, and you will sit there and wait. I can't tell ye how long you must wait, but after a time you will see a gentleman coming up the hill towards ye. He will stop and ask what you be doing there. Don't ye be afraid of him, dear, but stand up and answer him. Tell him how Master Grambla ha' used ye, and tell him you ha' got no home, and tell him you craves service. Then he will take ye by the hand, and you must go with him, dear, for he is a good gentleman, and will take ye home. Perhaps the gentleman won't come by to-day. You must wait at the cross till evening, and if he don't come by you will run back here and bide the night wi' me. You must go quick, child—as fast as you can—else the gentleman may go by before you gets there."

Mother Gothel opened her eyes and smiled weirdly. She seemed surprised when Ruth began to overwhelm her with gratitude.

"What have I been saying, dear? I be all cold and prickly, while I tells the future, and when I wakes up I don't know what I've said."

" I am to go to the cross-roads, and wait there until a gentleman finds me."

" Which way was you to go, my dear ? "

" By the track to the left of the pathway round Great Gwentor."

" 'Twould be Wartha Cross."

" I was to start at once, lest I miss the gentleman."

" Run then, dear ! Run, my pretty ! Don't ye heed tired legs while you run to the future. And when you see the moon, be sure to drop a curtsy and to kiss your hand."

With a last word of thankfulness Ruth hurried away, throwing heart and will into her task, so that she reached the cross in less than half an hour. Nobody was in sight, and few parishioners, not guided to the spot by lunar spells, were likely to pass ; for the two roads made a cross upon high moorland, and were used chiefly by peat-cutters or travellers with their packhorses.

Down upon the stone sat the excited maiden and laughed for joy, but did not forget to thank heaven for guiding her to Mother Gothel.

She was patient for one hour, but nobody came. She waited for two hours, then growing tired of weaving romances, which all ended in the same way, and becoming a little chilled, she walked about the stone, and finally clambered on it to look along every road. She saw only black moorland hard by, with trees and hedges in the distance.

She waited another hour, then her tears came again, for she began to fear that the kind old woman had deceived her ; and she was wicked enough to question whether Mother Gothel could really have flown up to the moon and returned to earth in less than twenty minutes.

Again Ruth sat upon the stone, which she dare not leave, her head bowed upon her knees, knowing that evening was near, feeling she had been sent upon a

foolish errand. Her bruised body ached, and her mind was in pain with the knowledge she would soon be dragging her weary feet towards Poldrifty. She prayed to the old gentleman of the moon, and kissed her little wet hand, and tried to curtsy; then she prayed to the proper place; and at last she fingered the hidden trinket of her poor drowned mother, and prayed to her.

"Why are you weeping, child?"

Ruth sprang up with a cry. There was the gentleman standing upon the grass, and he was the same mysterious bearded priest who had entered Coinagehall to bless her. The same in figure and the same in kindness.

"Oh, sir! I have waited for you such a long time," she stammered.

"Were you expecting me, Ruth?"

"Mother Gothel told me, sir, if I waited here you would come for me."

"And you believed Mother Gothel?"

"Oh, sir, I know she is a very powerful witch. She rides up to the moon upon her broomstick."

"I see you are cold and tired. How came those marks upon your face?"

"I fell, sir, and cut my mouth."

"Did not your master beat you?"

"That is true, sir."

"You have served Grambla for many years?"

"All my life, sir."

"Now you have left him."

"Sir, he sent me away."

"What did he give you beyond kicks and bruises?"

"Nothing, sir."

"No desire for vengeance, Ruth?"

"If I might be happy, sir, I should not think of him again."

"Could you pray for him, Ruth?"

"Yes, sir, if I were happy; but when wretched I can pray only for myself."

"What is your desire ? "

"To be taken into your service, sir."

"Do you know me ? "

"I do not know you, sir, but I believe you have seen my mother."

"Your mother is dead."

"I did not see you walk along the road. I prayed to my mother, and then you spoke to me."

"You believe I am a magician ? "

"Oh, sir, I am sure."

"What is that you have dropped from your apron ? "

"Nothing, sir."

"Look again, child."

"It is a rose ! A rose in March ! Now I know you are a magician."

"Yet you are not afraid of me."

"I should be afraid, sir, if you called up the dandy-dogs ; but I have no fear of a magician who makes the roses bloom in March."

"Where would you have gone had I not passed this way ? "

"Sir, my heart would have failed me. May I keep this rose ? "

"It is yours, child. Will you come with me ? "

"Gladly, sir."

"If I take you to my home, you must learn obedience and avoid curiosity. You must not go into any part which is forbidden, nor try to open any door ; and you must not reveal any secret of the house to strangers."

"Sir, I will be obedient."

"Come," said the priest, and they set off down the hill.

They passed along a road where Ruth had never walked before ; while the calm bearded priest talked so kindly she could hardly tell whether it was morning or evening ; nor could she tell how far they went.

They came into a dark lane, where the budding trees met overhead ; so that sunshine, even in summer,

could not reach the track. As far as Ruth could see all was moss and ferns ; but the moss was greener, and the ferns were larger, than any she had ever seen before ; and now she knew this was one of the roads to fairyland.

" I suppose, sir, we are now a very long way from Moyle church-town ? "

" Here is the boundary."

A stream ran across the lane, and it was now so dark that the water was hardly visible. Ruth shrank away, feeling sure she was about to leave the world of human beings ; but the priest gathered her up in his arms and carried her across upon unseen stepping-stones.

The road beyond became darker and narrower ; still they went downhill. Ruth seized the guide's right hand, and hardly dared to look ahead when he opened the gate and said, " Now we are almost home."

They went along a path between great trees, and came out upon a gravel walk which described all manner of windings among shrubs and beside beds of tulips. Ruth knew that tulips were favoured by the fairies, therefore she was not surprised to see them. The air became milder ; not a twig shook ; there was no sign of human life in this enchanted country. But as they went on she heard the most wonderful music, and stayed to listen.

" So you have never heard the harp before," said the guide.

Suddenly an almost overpowering warmth met Ruth, and a dim light reached her eyes. She had never dreamed of anything like this. The roof appeared to be made of crystal ; flowers of every colour were around her ; roses brushed her cheek ; while the rich perfume made her dizzy. So this was the underworld ! The old woman of the farm had told her about it, and had suggested she had been there herself, only she could not quite remember all the details. Ruth

was glad to be there, but fully determined to return to the other world when she had saved some money.

At last she found herself in a large room which she could recognise ; for it was undoubtedly a kitchen, although she had never seen anything so magnificent in her life. The priest had disappeared, but an elderly woman, who spoke English very ill, stood beside her ; and a number of other fairies, who looked like men and women, bustled about, speaking strange languages ; and a queer little gnome walked up to bow grotesquely and to promise Ruth his protection at all times ; and then a pert kitchen-wench ran up and said, " The housekeeper do wish to know whether you eat supper now quick and go to bed, for she says you are seemed to be tired out."

" Oh yes, if you please," Ruth murmured.

There was so much bustle and noise the girl hardly knew whether she was dreaming or awake, as she sat in a warm corner eating enchanted food, which tasted remarkably nice. She seemed to awaken when the elderly woman guided her along a passage, up flight after flight of stairs, and left her in a neat little room with a kind word of farewell for the night ; but she was certainly dreaming when a light knock came upon the door, and immediately there entered a dark and beautiful lady, most magnificently dressed, who came up to Ruth, and kissed her, saying with a pretty accent, " You are quite safe now, Ruth. We shall take care of you."

" I am indeed in fairyland ! " gasped Ruth. " Oh, madam, are you the queen ? "

" Oh, foolish child ! " laughed her beautiful majesty. " I am the Lady Just."

CHAPTER XIII

THE ATTORNEY ENJOYS A STROKE OF GREAT GOOD FORTUNE

TOBY the trifler waited upon Jacob after the dinner hour, and discovered the little gentleman in uncommon good-humour; for business went well, his enemies appeared in full flight, and the apparition had ceased to trouble. But the parchment face became filled with creases when the spy began his tattle.

Toby sat upon a chest of consciences, and carved a peg-top for his own amusement while he told a tale:

"When last I go through Bezurrel Woods I know something is going on. I see a cart of clay, and a load of reed; and I haven't cut two whip-staves from the blackthorn when a load of stone goes by. Carts, drivers, and horses were strangers, master; all from t'other side of the brook. I dare not follow, for I know them chaps of the next parish are 'ever on the look-out to crack a head of Moyle. I cut another whip-staff, and am slipping away when one of Sir Thomas's idolaters catches me, and he takes my whip-staves, and whips me with the biggest; and the louder I swear the harder he whips. I aren't been easy in my back parts since."

"You, a free Cornishman, allow yourself to be whipped by a negro!" said the disdainful Jacob.

"Master, he warn't a negro. He warn't black, nor red, nor yet white. He was cob colour. He didn't ask me for permission before he whipped. If he had asked I would never have allowed him to whip me. I go back when 'tis dark and cut me two more whip-

staves ; and I follow the cart-tracks till I get near the stream ; and I run into a wall where no wall was last week, and I know by the smell 'tis all fresh cob. I sit me down on a pile of reed, and think it out as artful as yourself ; and at last I say, ' Sir Thomas is a-building a little house in this wood.' Then I think a bit more out, and I say, ' He gets men from the next parish to build it.' I think again, and I get so artful that I sweat ; for I know, master, Sir Thomas is afraid of you finding out he is a-building a little house in Bezurrel Wood."

" You have much information," said Jacob. " I have a great respect for you, Mr. Penrice. I love you, sir. You are the only parishioner with enough wit to discover that Sir Thomas Just is indeed afraid of me."

" I have a very tidy wit, Master Grambla," said Toby. " I have money too, sir, as you know. I have not a wife, but I do not despair of getting one."

" Proceed," said the attorney. " And do not forget to tell the parishioners how mightily Sir Thomas stands in awe of me."

" I go home thinking, and I sleep thinking, and I rise thinking," continued Toby. " I watch the path-way through the wood, and 'tis near noon when Clabar and that Peter come by, and young Mr. Martin Just goes with them ; and they talk about the house which is a-building, and they go down towards it. Then I think——"

" Sir Thomas builds a house for the Clabars in his woods. He takes them under his protection," Jacob muttered, unable longer to play the part of listener. " What are the Clabars to him ? They are paupers—they have no fortune—yet he gives them land, and house, and friendship. He has shown no kindness to any other man or woman. He bestows no thought upon the parish. I promise you he has never walked in the church-town. Yet by his arts he discovers there are Clabars ! "

"True, master! I have trespassed upon Bezurrel land a hundred times, yet Sir Thomas has shown no kindness to me," said Toby. "'Tis a dark rogue, sir. He arrives from the East with an outlandish woman. No one save the servants are allowed near the castle, and they are from Arabia, and 'tis said they be bound by dreadful spells. Sir Thomas dwells in his magic chambers, brewing from fearful herbs which poison the air for miles—ay, and kill the fishes in the sea—and at night he reads from his books and calls up spirits. Lady Just sits at her window playing and singing, and calling the mermaids out of the sea. Many a fisherman will tell ye they have seen hundreds of spirits coming out of the rocks, and out of churchyard, and flying to Bezurrel when they hear her singing."

Toby having been dismissed, Jacob sat for a long time deep in thought. Then he left the office and walked to Poldrifty Downs; but he came in vain, for the crazy hovel was closed, and Mother Gothel had plainly been absent for some time, as her fire was a heap of ashes. So Jacob retraced his steps, and had reached the path across the fields when he remembered Ruth; or rather it occurred to him that Coinagehall stood empty.

Never had the house looked so grim, although the sun was shining upon its walls, and bees were merry in the air. It was the mind of the man which made it grim. The house would have looked the same had it been the home of happy people, or had Ruth been working in the kitchen. But to Jacob it was empty, and that knowledge made the walls seem awful. Emptiness invited terror which the presence of the meanest maiden might have banished. Jacob had no love for his fellow-creatures; but he liked them near him, as submissive beings, when the night drew on. Something had irritated him all day by striking against his leg at every movement. Now he remembered it was the key of that prison-like door—the

suggestion of prison came also from his mind—and when his hand drew forth the little bar of iron he thought of chains and cells. He entered, leaving the door open to admit more light, and went on tiptoe to the kitchen; for he was afraid to disturb that silence which seemed to own the place. He saw Ruth's working apron, and upon the table her knitting. The loose thread trailed upon the floor in the form of a question mark: Why did you save me from the sea? Why did you make me your slave? Why have you cast me out? Jacob laughed for answer, and the empty house laughed with him.

"She was learning too quickly," he muttered. "Her age made her dangerous—I had forgot until yesterday how old she was. I discharged her, not because she secreted a lover in my house, nor yet because she stole my guineas, but because it was time for her to go. I would have kept her one more year—no longer—for she was a ready wench, and could serve a simple dinner. I did better than I thought. Sir Thomas has taken a liking to the Clabars. Had the wench stayed, he might also have shown some kindness to her—he might even have practised his enchantments upon her; and thus have discovered what breed she comes of."

He spoke aloud, and as the sound of his words died away silence closed down with a shock. Some demon of dumbness seemed to be master of the kitchen; but when Jacob had glanced at the false face of the clock he discovered its garrulity had ceased. Opening the case he drew up the weights, but the clock remained silent. The spring had broken while Ruth wept beside it.

"Nay, if there is a conspiracy of silence against me, my tongue shall break it," cried Jacob. "The wench is but a weakling. She cannot stand rough weather, and if she could some rascal of the road would break her head for the sake of the clothes she

carried—though they were patched till the first piece had disappeared. I would have made her safe by marriage. Ay, I would have put on a fine coat and gone to church with her—for a wife is your only kitchen-wench. She may give no evidence against you; and you may starve your good woman; and you may whip her soundly—moreover you may with firmness break her heart. I perceive the sun is setting—darkness in one hour. The good man loves the light, the evil man hates it. I am, by this same reckoning, the most worthy soul alive.”

The stillness, as night drew near, could not increase, but it remained: not a bird sang in the shrubberies, nor was there movement in the tall bleached stems of last year's grass. Jacob went for fuel and made a fire; and that burnt noiselessly. He searched the cupboards and procured some food. He hurried to the door and closed it, for the first deep shadows were about to pass inside. The dog-gates, which had been fastened against the wall for many years, he now released and closed across the foot of the stairs.

There seemed mischief in the evening, for the sky was wild with jagged clouds and bands of scarlet westward. Jacob was glad to lock the shutters and to light candles, which added illusion to the darkness while they gave him light. He set them about the kitchen and watched the steady flames, but shivered as a red cap formed upon each wick. The spirit of mischief was upon the candles. He huddled over the fire, growing colder. He held his hands close to the logs, but the bright red patches seemed to have been painted; and he had scarce courage to walk round the room to snuff off those vile red caps.

“Man was not made to live alone. Why, there's some truth in that,” he muttered. “I would not live in Coinagehall alone. An old house, and full of memories. Many a man, woman, and child have died

in the rooms above, and been carried down those stairs—yet the place is not haunted. I know not why a man should fear to dwell alone. He does not fear night upon the road where highwaymen are abroad ; but within a house—ah, what is that ? A shadow—I would make sure of that. Ay, the shadow of my head. A man when alone will shudder at a cricket on the hearth. I would obtain a charm against these fancies. I had forgot the evening, the long night. 'Tis not good, I say. To-morrow I will bring Mother Gothel from Poldrifty—will give the good soul a black gown, a handful of coppers, a kind word or two. She will leave her hole in the rocks gladly, and will serve me well. Moreover she will advise me. Men and women were made to live together—there's authority for that. I would examine some papers in my box, but I like not to leave this fire—I did not think the night would come so cold. If I had servants, I would read them prayers. 'Tis a good custom, and a fitting ending to the day. I would read a chapter from the Bible, but I know not where to find the book. I have not seen it of late. Ruth would not have needed it—I believe she had not learnt her letters. I fear me she was not God-fearing—would lie and steal. I did well. I would find the Bible. 'Tis a protection against evil spirits."

The dying down of the fire forced him to rise for fuel. Moving stealthily, he brought wood, piled it upon the hearth, stared into every corner ; then seated himself upon a wooden stool within the ingle-nook, and continued his defiant meditations :

" That Jacob Grambla has worked hard. Should be a wealthy man, for he misses no day, except it be Sunday, when he will do his duty as a Christian—never goes to fair or market save on business. If soil was silver and cottages were gold, he would be wealthy. That Jacob Grambla would spend with an open hand, for he is no miser, mark you ; he perceives the folly of

getting a fortune and leaving it to others. He knows life is but a chase after wealth, and the man who leaves behind a scent of guineas will be hunted. Jacob Grambla would see them in full cry after him—squires, parsons, high-born rakes, merchants of trade. He would flatter, call them friends, ease each shoe where the pinch was sharpest. Would teach them to say to neighbours, 'At the sign of the scales in Moyle church-town the affairs of gentlemen are arranged by Jacob Grambla.' He would furnish this house after the latest fashion, fill this kitchen with servants, give dinners and routs. Would stand at the foot of the stairs in a peach-bloom coat to welcome his guests, 'Sir, this condescension overwhelms me'; 'Madam, this is too great an honour.' Would rise at the head of the table and toast the company. Would learn some pretty speeches from the novels. Why, sir, there's money to be got by this same scenting of the track with guineas. There's honour, there's a rubbing of low-born shoulders with the high-born, there's a mighty good respectability—and they who come to flatter stay to borrow. Trust Jacob Grambla how to use the borrower!"

Courage was rising while his limbs began to glow. Already he saw Coinagehall the mansion of a rich man, and himself dictator. He grew careless of the night, disdained the silence, almost forgot his loneliness and Ruth; while he chatted to this best of all companions:

"Jacob Grambla has the conscience of a Whig; but he who would rise must sink his best opinions. To my lord and lady he would proclaim Whiggism as the invention of the devil. As a good Tory he would buy a borough. He knows of one ripe for the purse; the price one thousand guineas—no more than sixty votes to be paid and feasted. A man in Parliament has his fingers in the treasury—'twould be an evil fate if Jacob Grambla could not get in his hand; for he is a man of learning and great wit—worthy to be my Lord Chief

Justice—who understands the human nature, and can measure it ; who has a kindly disposition and some knowledge of good manners—is that the wind, or creaking of a door, was that a footstep ?—and who fears God. These cursed candles ! The light is half extinguished by the snuff."

Suddenly cold again, he crept from the fireside corner, and reached out a hand for the snuffers. But he did not raise the arm, and the implement rattled on the floor. The door was flung open, and upon the threshold stood Red Cap, the wound upon his forehead and a smoky light surrounding him.

Jacob had fallen upon the stone floor, and there he lay with his face hidden, while the kitchen became noisy with the thumping of his heart. The spell of silence seemed to have been broken ; for the wind now whispered about the house, and owls hooted from the meadows.

Jacob dragged himself half upright, gasping and dribbling at the mouth, yet knowing the worst was over. He had survived the shock of receiving the apparition ; therefore he could bear to speak.

"In the name of God," he gasped.

The spirit made wild movements with its arms.

"Who are you ? Why do ye come to haunt me ? "

"Now that you have addressed me, I may answer. I come to guide you to the place where the gold lies buried."

As the spirits of a ship's company revive when the harbour is sighted, after storm, so did the attorney's courage leap back when he heard this utterance. He dragged himself fully upright, remembering all that Mother Gothel had told him regarding the power of Red Cap ; and was now able to look upon that ghastly face with its running wound and the smoky death-fumes round it ; hardly shivering as he said, "You come to aid me."

"I am sent that you may profit by my example.

You long for wealth, Jacob Grambla. So did I. You shall have wealth, even as I won it."

"Who are you?"

"I lived here once. Wealth brought no happiness to me, for I made ill use of it. I spent it to the glorification of myself—and at last, Jacob Grambla, I killed myself. See the wound which I must bear through all eternity!"

"I like not your appearance," said the lawyer.

"Yet I give you a hearty welcome."

"Come!" said the ghost, retreating into the darkness of the hall, where his squat figure gleamed most horribly.

Jacob was very willing to follow, but found his legs powerless. Terror had deserted his mind to take firm hold upon his feet.

"Come!" cried the spirit. "Come, or you lose the treasure. After to-night I may not be permitted to reveal it."

"Where would you lead me?" Jacob muttered, fearing to venture into the night with this graveyard comrade.

"Follow, and you shall know."

"My desire is to go with you, but I lack the strength to move."

"Come!" shouted the ghost. "The devil and his angels give you strength. Now I perceive you are a man again!"

It was indeed true that, immediately these words were spoken, Jacob found himself able to follow his guide, who muttered as they left the house, "I charge you address me no more in the Name of God; for if you do so I shall depart from you."

They crossed the fields, entered the lane, and continued towards Poldrifty, following the exact course taken by Ruth a few hours earlier; Red Cap going ahead in his own smoky atmosphere which smelt uncommonly nasty; striding along with a gait so natural

that Jacob was forced to mutter, " Truly a man walks very like his ghost ! "

They ascended towards the rough pathway trodden by Ruth during her journey from the witch's hovel to her cross of waiting ; but left it presently to enter the heather and make the steeper climb towards the highest point in all the parish.

" He makes for the summit of Great Gwentor, the hill of Arthur's queen," said Jacob pleasantly, beginning to smile and chafe his hands. " Time out of mind have tales been told of treasure buried there. I thank heaven——"

" What was that name you uttered ? " cried the keen Red Cap, pausing among the heath and shivering.

" I praise the powers of darkness," exclaimed Jacob piously. " Sir, I humbly thank your master for what small knowledge I possess."

They continued to ascend without more words, and came among the boulders which time and confusion had heaped upon the top. Reaching a mossy slope, the ghost came to a stand beside a long flat stone ; and turning his ghastly face towards the lawyer asked, " What does this stone recall ? "

" 'Tis very like a tombstone."

" Go upon your knees and by this glimmer of moonlight decipher what is written here."

The attorney obeyed, and presently spoke respectfully, " Sir, there is nothing written. Many such stones are to be found upon this moorland, and 'tis said savages of old lie buried under them."

" Your eyes are dull. Mine read upon this surface, ' Sacred to the memory of an honest gentleman ; who died, loved by friends, respected by enemies, mourned by all. His virtues were numerous ; his faults founded upon generosity.' Thus it was said of me, Jacob Grambla, when I had ended my life of vice. My body lies beneath this stone. There lies a portion of the gold I lost myself to win."

"If it would please you, sir, to have your body removed and reinterred in holy ground, I will see to it."

"It does not please me. Lift that stone, and my curse shall follow you. The gold, Jacob Grambla! Will you take it, or leave it?"

"Have you not brought me here that I may take it? To leave it would be sinful."

"You may take the gold, yet I would have you know it brings a curse to him who handles it. Beneath this cairn of stone it lies, a sum sufficient to make you wealthy. Some thousands of gold pieces, Jacob Grambla."

"Sir," gasped the lawyer, "is it not possible to take the gold, and yet evade the curse?"

"Surely it is. Spend the treasure well, use it to aid the weak and suffering, to relieve the widow and orphan—as I did not—then a blessing shall follow. Spend it upon yourself, upon making your name great, upon flatterers and those willing to be bribed—even as I did—then, Jacob Grambla, my fate shall be yours; you also shall die by your own hand, and your spirit shall cling for ever to the earth where your body lies."

"I take the treasure, and shall use it well, so help me——" He broke off, not daring to utter the Name which was forbidden; while the spectre laughed to hear him stammer, then stretching out an arm towards the stone heap muttered solemnly, "Dig there, if you have the courage to be wealthy. Use the gold well, and we shall not meet again. Use it ill, and I appear. By the sign of my coming you shall know your time is short. Mark this place and go your way until the morning. The night is mine. I am doomed to haunt this spot until the gold has vanished."

White stones lay upon the summit of Great Gwentor. Jacob gathered a few and placed them about the cairn in a manner which he could not fail to recognise; then without another word—for speech now failed him—he sped away, ran from the moorland, and did

not open his mouth until he had reached the fields of Coinagehall. There he clenched his fists and shouted, "To-morrow I shall prove whether this vision has been sent by the father of lies or by the God of truth."

Something white gleamed upon the grass before the house, and he turned to gather it. Nothing terrified him now, not even the darkness of the interior—for the candles had guttered out, and the fire was a mass of embers—not the black stairs, nor the wind in the rooms upstairs. The coming of the ghost had insured him against terror, and darkness was now soothing to his soul.

He blew the embers into flame, lighted fresh candles, then toasted the midnight with a dram. He laughed and lifted up his voice in song, and turned some capers about the kitchen. And his song was always, "To-night I am poor ; to-morrow I shall be rich. God save the soul of Red Cap—and may we not meet again."

Then he fell into a chair and smiled at his crooked fingers.

"Why should a man fear ?" he asked himself more soberly. "If he goes to heaven—well ! If he does not, is it so great a punishment to wander about this earth ? Heaven—'tis a name. This world I know and love. Give me this world, I pray, for ever and evermore. And if there be any other spirits in this house, I call them now, I invite them to appear before me, and sit with me beside this fire. I swear an everlasting compact with the dead—no psalm-singing dead for me, but honest Red Caps, good wounded Red Caps, who know where the gold lies hidden."

Remembering the white object he had discovered upon the grass, he drew it out and held it to the fire-light. It was Ruth's handkerchief, stained with blood.

"Yet I would fain remain a Churchman and a Christian," he muttered.

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF A NEW RELIGION

ONE evening Cherry wandered away from Bezurrel Woods, and along the lane to Moyle. It was early summer, more than a year having passed since she and her father had taken possession of the home built for them by Sir Thomas. She looked stronger than ever, walked like a man in her long sack-coat ; spoke like one ; gave the wall like a gallant to wenches who regarded her with sighs ; and received the same privilege herself from that class of men who ill-used their wives. Handsome Peter had long been the wonder of three parishes ; the admired of maidens, and the envy of youths. Half-witted, said the gossips, because she made garlands of flowers for the children, and would carry them into the woods to hear her stories.

She heard a voice, which seemed to have tears behind it, as she came out near a sandhill, rather higher than the others, but without much grass ; and there was a crowd about it, composed entirely of men, the majority standing, but many on their knees ; and upon the summit of the little hill stood a stranger, his feet hidden by the sand ; a man wearing his own long hair, with a bushy beard and weather-beaten face, and two eyes staring from the unclipped tangle ; and when Cherry drew near she heard the great name, God, shouted by this stranger many times.

“ And now, brothers, I have this one more thing to say. Ye are men, and God has dealt with ye as with

your masters ; He gives the same to all. Ye have not eyes to read, nor fingers to write ; but ye have ears to hear—thank God for ears, brothers. And ye have brains to understand—thank God for brains, brothers. And ye have minds to think—thank God for minds, brothers. Are these no gifts ? Queen Anne upon her throne, my Lord Archbishop in his palace, have no better ; for place and power, brothers, are not so good as minds and brains. Here is the message I have come to bring ye—discover yourselves as men ; use the great gifts which God has given ye ; think for yourselves ; be not too ready to accept the opinions of any man ; do not refuse my teaching, neither agree with it, until ye have gone about your duties, and have searched in your own minds for the truth—a prayer shall bring it, and ye shall know by the flood of light within ye when it comes.

“ Ye are Christians, brothers. All go to church, and hear the psalms sung by a few hired mouths, and hear a poor honest gentleman read the prayers and preach the sermon. Do ye thank God for ears while ye sit in the pews ? Do ye hold your heads between your hands and strive to think ? Do ye feel the great glory burn within ye when ye hear the rough music of the choir ? Do ye hearken to the prayers ? Do the tears come while ye listen to the sermon ? Answer with a shout, brothers. One word will do it.”

The negative went up from all around the sandhill.

“ Nay, the heads are all nodding while they hear the music of the psalms. Minds are thinking of the mines and fishing-nets when the prayers are read. And while the poor honest gentleman preaches his sermon brains are all asleep. Your ears are not touched, and your minds are not stirred, for the church gives ye no living spirit of religion. No church and no curate shall give to a man what he was meant to discover for himself. Hear, brothers, understand, think ; then discover to yourselves and to each other

whether church and curate bring God to ye. If church and curate do not bring the flood of glory into your souls, how may ye conform with a doctrine of dry bones? Refuse to conform, though you be sent to prison. Think together, brothers, and meet together; and let the man who can read be your teacher, and let the man who can receive a message from God be your preacher. Come together in holy brotherhood, and open your eyes to see God, and open your ears to receive His message; and they who have brains to understand, and minds to think, shall pray that their brothers in darkness may receive the light."

Cherry regarded the men about her, and saw tears trickling down their grimy cheeks. Liberty in thought, enthusiasm in religion—here was indeed new teaching! These men had never thought for themselves, except upon matters of daily life, upon their toil, their wives and children, their commonplace necessities. They had never even heard of brains and minds. Like men accepting prison fare, they had taken such religion as had been offered, although it was wrapped in words they could not understand. And now they were told—these coarse miners and rough fishermen, people of no account in the eyes of a society bishop who did not visit his diocese, and a drunken vicar who had never seen his parish—they were urged, in simple language, to make a new religion for themselves. Already they were drifting from the loose hold of an indifferent church. They were set on fire by this sermon from the sandhill. They surged towards the preacher and almost pressed him to the ground. Nonconformity had come to Moyle for ever.

Cherry went her way, more thrilled by this new birth than she would own, yet truth, she told herself, could not proceed from the mouth of a strolling preacher. She looked back. The man with the long hair and staring eyes stood again apart from the people, who appeared to storm against him, but his calm voice

rose above their tempest, as he spoke of seedtime and harvest, of tares and wheat, of angel-reapers of men's deeds, and harvest-home in heaven. And the shouts died down. Then Cherry saw, apart from the others, an aged miner, bent and scarred, and he knelt upon the sand, his hat before him, his white hair fluttering in the breeze, and a hand which lacked two fingers behind his ear.

The wind sprang up from the sea, and Cherry ran with it until she came to a path across the fields. She wandered along and reached the gate of the church-yard, but did not enter because the place seemed ugly. The fence had broken down and old women of the neighbourhood were pulling away pieces for their fires. Fowls were scratching upon the graves, and pigs routed in the grass. The place of the dead was a paradise for farm-beasts.

A slight figure rose and came along the pathway; recognising Ruth the nameless, Cherry advanced to meet her with the question, "What are you doing here?"

"I have been attending to my grave," she answered.

"I did not know your family had ever lived in Moyle."

"My mother is buried here."

"So is mine. I do not know your story."

"My mother and I were cast up by the sea."

"How long ago was that?"

"When you and I were but a few months old."

"Do you know my story?"

"Mother Gothel has told me. I wish I could remember."

"What would you remember?"

"The storm," said Ruth. "You were born in the storm, and your mother died. I was brought here by the storm, and my mother died."

"What did Mother Gothel say about me?"

"She told me how your eyes changed not long after your birth."

"She has never told me that."

"You were born with black eyes, and they changed to grey."

"Have you told any one of this?"

"Once when Sir Thomas questioned me, I told him."

"How did he answer?"

"He said nothing to me, but he spoke in a strange language to my lady."

"I shall tell my father and question Mother Gothel."

"I believe she changed your eyes with her magic, when she perceived that black eyes would not suit you."

"Will you show me your mother's grave?" asked Cherry.

"Gladly, if you will come with me. I made it neat, and fenced it with sticks, but the churchwarden told me I should not have done so without permission, and when I asked for permission he would not give it because he claims this as a grazing-place. Now my sticks have been taken away and the pigs foul her grave."

"Are you a papist, Mistress Ruth?"

"I am afraid to be a papist because that religion is forbidden."

"It is a living religion," said Cherry, yet compelled to think of the preacher on the sandhill.

"Sir Thomas may be a papist because he is a gentleman. And you may be a papist because you are strong. And the servants of Bezurrel may be papists because they are foreigners. I have no influence, I am weak, and I am English."

"You cannot be sure of that. Perhaps your parents were members of the one true church."

"I feel myself English. Here is my grave, Master Clabar."

"Why do you call it yours? This grave belongs to a dead church. You may not even put up a fence of sticks. The beasts have more right to this grave than you."

"My mother gives it me. The place where she is buried must be mine. Mother Gothel will tell you how beautiful she was."

"My mother lies in that far corner—where those vile hens are scratching. We are sister and brother here, Mistress Ruth. We have each of us a beautiful mother buried in this farmyard, and both died of the storm while suckling us—but the stone above my mother bears a name. Nay, I would not reproach you."

Ruth had flushed, but there was more wonder in her eyes than pain.

"I did not know a man could look so gently, while his tongue was harsh," she murmured.

Cherry turned, anxious to hide her face, and kept silent until they reached the lichgate, which was crumbling like the rest, and then she spoke again :

"I am Cornish, the descendant of stout yeomen, and my rightful home is Coinagehall ; while you, Mistress Ruth, may be a lady much superior to me in birth and name. I am happy in Bezurrel Woods, yet I am not at home. I would travel. I would cross the sea. This Cornish parish is too small for me."

"I have no desire to leave it," said Ruth.

"Yet you were brought here from another land."

"I have a great love for Coinagehall. I long for my dear kitchen, not indeed, as it is now, but as I knew it—with the warming-pan, the dear old clock. All lumber now !"

"I would see my father restored, then travel," said Cherry. "I was brought up upon the other side of Tamar, and mingled with the sailors of Dock. From them I learnt about the colony of Virginia, the plantations, the waste of tree-stumps, the log-houses, the Indians. Their stories give me the desire to see this land of settlers for myself."

"Once you came to Coinagehall with your father," Ruth whispered nervously.

"The day after my arrival in Moyle."

"And you saw two apparitions!"

"Ah! Can I suspect you, fair, shrinking Mistress Ruth?"

"I was one of the ghosts."

"The other?"

"The man whose life and liberty I fought for. Pardon me, Master Clabar. The trick was played to save my lover."

"I come to know your history," said Cherry. "My father often talks about that vision, and now believes it was an omen sent to cheer him. I shall say nothing to disturb his faith. Tell me of your lover."

"Now you do not speak like a man," said Ruth, but her eyes were troubled, for she had no good account to give. Yet she told the story which had ended in the primrose copse, then put the question, "Do you suppose, Master Clabar, I shall hear from him again?"

"Why yes, Mistress Ruth. If he is worthy he will return some day with a smiling face and a purse of guineas, and I give you my promise he is worthy. In Bezurrel Woods we teach a new philosophy, ay, and we follow it ourselves. We look forward with hope, and do not admit despair. We are agreed that every event is the most fortunate circumstance that can happen. We enjoy each hour fully, and have but little regard for what may follow in the next. When the sun is too powerful, we remember it lately gave no heat at all; when the rain pours, we say to-morrow will be fine. And we receive as friends all happy people. Visit us in Bezurrel Woods, Mistress Ruth, and become one of us, whose badge is happiness. You shall see the flowers I have planted, and hear the singing of birds I have tamed. Then you will believe our philosophy of the woods may also be applied to the day of the labourer, and the thoughts of lovers. If your Harry returns, it will be well. If he does not return, it will still be well. Whatever happens is the fortunate event. And if it does not look to you fortunate

—why, then forget it, and come away to Bezurrel Woods, and sing with me beneath the honeysuckle.”

“ I thank you, Master Clabar. I shall try to do as you say,” said timid Ruth.

“ Are you not happy ? ”

“ Sir Thomas and Lady Just are most kind. When I wait upon my lady she is a mother for gentleness. Yet I am not happy.”

“ Do you fear that meagre ape in his silver-embroidered coat, who cannot stir abroad unless a flunkey carries before him a gold-headed cane ? ”

“ I do not fear Mr. Grambla now ; yet I would not put myself in his pathway.”

“ Then why are you not happy ? ”

“ I am alone, I have no name, and God seems to have forgotten me—and I cannot find the way.”

“ It is already marked clearly before your feet,” cried Cherry.

“ The way to God—the way my mother went,” said Ruth. “ Father Benedict is kind ; he seeks to inform me, but I cannot understand him, and he speaks English ill. My lady does not permit me to attend the church, for it can do you no good, she says ; and ’tis true I have heard little there except the snores of sleepers. I do not know the way because nobody will point it out. I am not happy, for I have lost my lover. But I am still more wretched with the fear that I shall lose my mother and my God.”

Cherry was glad when Ruth departed, for that cry made her mouth turn traitor. She turned towards the woods, but had gone no distance when David just rode up, leading another horse, and shouted, “ Ha, Peter ! Get upon this horse and ride with me.”

“ You have sat too long over the wine,” cried Cherry.

“ I am not drunk,” said David, rolling upon the saddle, his dark face flushed. “ I rode out with my brother, and this horse throws him, so he plays the coward and walks home.”

"Martin is no coward!"

"A bookworm—a scholar. He would paint and write poetry."

"Was he hurt?"

"No more than a cat. He was glad of the excuse to get back to the library. Upon such an evening to prefer a dark room and a musty volume! Come, Peter! 'Twill be dark in an hour. I will race you to the far end of the sandhills, through Moyle, and so back to Bezurrel Woods."

"The horse may throw me."

"He will, I warrant, if you ride him with hard hands. A gallant beast—a lady's horse. My mother has ridden him. You could put up a kitchen-wench, and he will go like a sheep. He is a brute with men."

"Yet you ask me to ride him."

"You have a woman's hands. You can speak with a woman's voice."

"Martin has gentle hands and a soft voice. Why did you not mount the beast yourself, for you are the better horseman?"

"My brother drinks no wine—he fears for his intellect. My bones are more precious than his, for I am the elder son. Peter, I'll wait for you no longer. I must ride off the fumes."

"Do you call me a woman?"

"God intended you for one. You are meant for a maid, but were given a man's strength at the last moment. If my brother should chance upon a lady with your face, he would not ask her fortune. The horse will not throw you, for you can deceive him. A gallant beast, I say!"

"I will show him what I am," cried Cherry, full of life and fight in the evening air. Then she flung herself into the saddle and was off, following David, who was already some way ahead, while the big horse carried her willingly.

By the lane skirting the woods they rode, and so

out to the sandhills, the elder son laughing and shouting all the way, Cherry watching his shoulders with a frown, and setting her teeth when he threatened to go ahead, determined upon beating him before the night came down. They galloped on until the last white cottage was passed, and there was nothing ahead except sand, stiff grass, and shadows. Then Cherry spoke to her steed in the soft voice that he loved, loosened the rein, confessed her sex with a caress, and the wise beast put forth his strength to such good purpose that David Just was soon some yards behind.

"You have won the first heat," he shouted, when they had reached the far end of the sandhills. "No man of my weight has ever beaten me before—and this horse is the speediest of the two."

"Ah, but I am a woman!" mocked Cherry.

"I cannot think what you are. You should be heavier than me, for you are broader, if I am taller—and that horse is slower. Egad, Peter, I wish the brute had thrown you."

"I am not your brother—and rival."

"Martin my rival! Martin the scholar! Who sits upon a tree-trunk reading Greek. I am the elder son, and can beat my brother on horseback or on foot."

"He drinks no wine and he knows literature. Therefore he beats you."

"Confound the two of ye! I'll not be beaten. What is your weight? What are you made of?"

"Feathers and foam," she laughed.

"Who are you?"

"The son of a poor man."

"Not the son of that lanky Clabar. I'll swear that. Why are you always laughing? Egad, Peter, I could strike you."

"You would be sorry," she threatened.

"If I struck you on the face—and you looked at me as you are doing now—I should be sorry. You and Martin go too much together."

"We are suited to each other."

"You sit with your two heads over one book, like a couple of women over a sampler."

"Working the motto, 'Love me and leave me not,' " she laughed.

"By heaven, Peter, you shall not mock me. Get off your horse——"

"Hunt me down," she cried, riding off, then waved her hand and shouted, "Follow me! Catch me! Ride! Ride, or you will be beaten again. Now my horse throws the sand into your face."

Well ahead she reached the church-town, a harvest ground where the seed scattered that day had already germinated. Night had almost come, yet the parishioners were not abed, and every cottage showed a rushlight. Women and children were singing hymns, old men found themselves inspired to preach, young men were upon their knees. Shouts of, "God ha' mercy upon us miserable sinners," proceeded from open doors. The sleepers were awakened.

Cherry slipped from the horse and waited for David, who came up still flushed and angry.

"I am sorry I mocked you. Let us not quarrel here," she said.

"What in the name of heaven has come to Moyle?" he cried.

"Something in that name," she answered. "Take the horse—he is indeed a gallant beast."

"Stay, Peter!" he called, as she pushed the rein into his hand. "What is the meaning of these cries?"

"A new religion is being born to-night," she said, and ran from him to the fields and foot-tracks.

It seemed like a royal birthday, for birds upon the branches of a monstrous yew—once the contemporary of Thor and Woden—standing alone in the churchyard, were disturbed by the clanging of historic bells. Six lusty parishioners perspired as they handled the ropes within the dim light of candles, guttered by the

breeze drifting through the balisteria, and while their arms controlled the bells, their tongues were praying.

Some of these men had rung out King James and popery, acting as obedient servants of the church. Now they were ringing in the age of liberty and the right to think.

The wandering preacher had gone upon his way by morning, leaving no name behind; and Moyle went out to work, but not as usual, because every man was thinking for himself. Miners prayed aloud as they went to the shaft, fishermen dragged their boats with hymns for chanties, and drew in their nets with anthems. Workers in the fields dropped their tools and went suddenly upon their knees, sobbing hysterically. Young men checked their tongues in the midst of an oath and prayed for pardon. Each evening meetings were held about the hallowed sandhill, when rough miners discovered in themselves the gift of eloquence. The half of Moyle one hour sang psalms and hymns, and the next sobbed aloud with spiritual excitement. The woman who had not yet fainted was regarded as impenitent.

Upon Sunday afternoon, when hovering near the most important meeting, anxious to hear these heralds of revolt, Cherry was startled by a scream, and pressing forward discovered a maiden writhing in convulsions upon the sand, with other screaming wenches round her.

"Another brand from the burning!" went up the cry. "Pray for her! See how the devil struggles for her! All together, brothers and sisters! Pull her back to God."

"These are not Christians," said Cherry, as she turned from the scene which became then horrible in her eyes. "If the book Father Benedict showed me in the library of Bezurrel contains the truth, this is but Paganism revived. Sir Thomas shall know how Ruth repays his kindness."

CHAPTER II

THE INGENIOUS MR. FRANCIS BARCLAY

THE first gentleman in Moyle took to the new religion kindly. He came, in the first instance after dark, to the house of Honey, the barber-surgeon—who bled for a penny and curled wigs for twopence—and on this occasion he was not preceded by a servant bearing a gold-headed cane. Some thought it was a crown upon the cane, others declared it was a skull ; but all agreed it was gold. For Jacob Grambla the attorney was now become a mighty fine gentleman.

Upon Honey the barber had also descended the gift of eloquence ; no doubt it had been with him always, but it was not discovered until religious enthusiasm began to burn. The first chapel was his room of consultation ; the first prayer-meeting beneath a roof took place amid razors, wig-blocks, and cupping-glasses. Here came the curate to pray, supposing in blind simplicity that the new movement claimed parentage from the church and his own dull sermons ; and was merely another outbreak against the old enemy of Rome. And perhaps he was not displeased when the bitter tongue of Honey denounced prodigal bishops and absent vicars ; but when his own order was attacked, and the doctrines of the church were scoffed at ; when moreover men and women sobbed wildly, and writhed upon the floor as if intoxicated ; then the curate murmured in great horror, " The devil is in this place." Carried away himself by the screams of the congregation, he pointed towards a bluebottle which chanced to buzz around the preacher's head,

and shouted, "There he is—Beelzebub, the king of flies! Zounds, how he stinks of brimstone!"

After that he departed to write a sermon against fanaticism, which he delivered to cracked walls and worm-bored benches.

Master Grambla, landed proprietor, giver of feasts to persons of distinction, came privately as became a wealthy sinner, and humbly after dark, lest his coming should offend the only folk whose good opinion was worth having. No man despised his fellow-creatures more than the attorney; yet it was the eloquence of Jacob Grambla which firmly established nonconformity in Moyle. Wobblers came over when he preached. Even Toby Penrice, who in his dull way was proud to disown religion, wept like a child while he listened to Master Grambla; though he was mindful to keep his arm around a maiden while he wept. What was good enough for the master of Coinagehall was bound to satisfy his following. Jacob stood between wig-blocks and cupping-glasses, in a coat covered with lace like the vestment of a papist bishop, and preached upon the doctrine of regeneration which was dear to his soul.

"Brothers and sisters," said he, in the somewhat whining voice which he doubted not was suitable for heaven, "it is not enough that we begin to lead a new life. We must first prepare ourselves to lead this life. We are born again when we embrace this new religion, and 'tis our duty to enter this new state like innocent children without sin. Brothers and sisters, we have all sinned in the past. I stand before you to confess that I have sinned in thought and deed. I have not always spoken truth; I may, even if unknowingly, have defrauded some poorer brother; I have profaned the Sabbath with thought of business. 'Tis true I have never lifted my hand against a fellow-creature, I have never—thank God—injured a woman, nor has any word of blasphemy fallen from my lips; but I have shown impatience at foul weather, and I have wrote

an idle letter on the Sunday. Since it is not possible for us to enter the new state while we remain in sin, we must receive baptism, which is a sacrament any man may administer to his brothers and sisters who are deemed worthy of receiving it. By this same baptismal regeneration our past misdeeds are wiped away, and we start forth into the new life like innocent children free of sin. Brothers and sisters, I humbly seek this baptism, and I require Brother Honey to perform the rite upon me. As a work of charity, and an offering of thanksgiving, I shall bestow one guinea upon each man and woman who receive the regenerating water with myself."

It was proposed that the rite should take place forthwith, but this Jacob could by no means approve of; as nothing short of complete immersion was able to satisfy his zeal, and he stood at that moment in his costliest garments. So he continued to preach, pointing out the necessity of spending first some hours in meditation.

"Let us," said he, "to-morrow night descend to Moyle harbour, and there cast our sins from us to the sea."

"Let us go rather in the light of day," said the courageous barber-surgeon.

"Brother Honey, it will not do," said Jacob sternly. "We are not afraid of any who may jeer at us—nay, we shall welcome persecution gladly—but let not our solemn rite be interrupted by ribald shouts of blasphemy."

"Master Grambla speaks wisely," cried Toby, who was minded to regain innocence and receive a guinea.

"The early Christians were not ashamed of the darkness. Neither shall we be ashamed," said Jacob.

The next evening was favourable to the fanatics, of whom all but two or three were pitifully in earnest; indeed the majority went sobbing to the sea. A silent cove was chosen; here Jacob was first immersed, wearing his oldest clothes, and afterwards he stood

exhorting others upon the very spot where he had knelt beside the dying lady and had taken the baby from her breast ; but not for long, because he considered his health and the danger of standing in saturated garments. Leaving the zealous barber to receive all other candidates, he departed homewards with the knowledge that his past was blotted out.

As if in answer to his challenge two horsemen rode into Moyle as darkness fell. Both were young ; the one unshaven and meanly clad ; the other very handsomely clothed and scented like a beau. They reined in their horses near the foot of Poldrifty Downs, and talked together for some time. Then the shabby traveller continued westward, while his companion, after watching horse and rider out of sight, advanced at a gentle trot towards the church-town.

Caherne the rhinder, who cared nothing for the spiritual uprising, crossed his track ; and the gay horseman stayed to question him.

“ How is this place named, friend ? ”

“ Moyle parish, sir. The church-town lies ahead.”

“ Who is squire, and where shall I find his house ? ”

“ Sir, I should be sorry to answer you with a word. Some would say Sir Thomas Just of Bezurrel is the first man in Moyle. Others would say Master Jacob Grambla of Coinagehall.”

“ Which opinion are you inclined towards ? ”

“ Sir, if I was taken before the magistrates, and one should ask me, ‘ Whom do you say is the greater—the Queen or myself ? ’ my answer would be, ‘ You, sir, are the greater.’ The Queen in London, sir, would be nought to me. The magistrate, who could commit me to prison, or discharge me from custody, would be by far the greater. Now, sir, I have answered you.”

“ I gather that Sir Thomas Just is headman of this parish, but he withdraws himself from the inhabitants ; while Master Grambla takes a place he has no right to occupy.”

"Sir, you may think so if you please. For my part I would desire to remain friendly with both. Sir Thomas was born a great gentleman, but Master Grambla is one of ourselves."

"I come to search for information. Who is most learned in the history of this parish?"

"Then, sir, you must go to Coinagehall. If you go to Bezurrel you will have but a wasted journey; for Sir Thomas admits neither stranger nor parishioner to his presence. Whereas Master Grambla is pleased to welcome any gentleman."

"I shall proceed to him at once, if you will point out the road to Coinagehall," said the stranger; and the rhinder having done so they parted. The horseman rode on with a contented smile, singing an old ballad as he went.

There was no real darkness at that period of the year, therefore Jacob could see the way as he hurried along, much ashamed of being recognised in dripping garments; his unchanging mind laughing to scorn a whitewashed conscience. Clear of the public road, he eased his pace across the fields, pausing at a newly erected fence to note and admire the last improvement; for the garden was being cut into shape, very much as a child might have clipped a pattern out of folded paper. Walks of gravel had been made, statues and urns were being set up, while a fountain was under course of building. Every shrub of box, yew, or holly, was clipped into the fantastic image of some bird or beast.

The spirit of regeneration had settled upon house as well as garden. The rooms suggested no longer coldness and desolation; the reign of mouse and spider had been ended; while the haunted region upstairs had been cleared out and refurnished. Jacob stepped into the stone-paved hall, where a large fireplace now appeared, fitted with massive dogs of the latest type. Here were polished tables, straight-backed chairs, a sofa of tapestry, a pair of brilliant sconces holding six

wax candles each, and a wonderful French clock, its dial formed of white flowered glass.

"Sir," said a gorgeous lackey, "Mr. Francis Barclay waits upon you."

"I do not know the gentleman," replied Jacob. "'Tis a strange time for a client to call on business."

"He came, sir, two hours ago ; and when I told him you were not in the house he rode away, promising to return."

"What manner of man ? " asked Jacob.

"Sir, a gentleman of rank undoubtedly."

"I go to change my garments. Lay me out the peach-bloom coat."

"I believe, sir, I hear a horseman."

"Show the gentleman into the reception-room—let all candles be lighted. Inform Mr. Barclay I shall presently be with him."

Jacob passed up the well-lighted stairway towards a room which twelve months back he dared not to have entered ; while the traveller was met at the door with a ceremony befitting so fine a face and figure. His horse was led to the stable, and he himself was ushered into the saloon ; where he stood staring about in a somewhat bewildered fashion, as if not much accustomed to such magnificence. He beheld a richly gilded cornice ; walls hung with crimson velvet ; tables and chairs of the recently introduced and costly wood mahogany ; cabinets filled with porcelain ; and grotesque footstools with supports of acanthus pattern.

Mirrors were much in evidence, handsomely framed and bearing sconces which held stout cylinders of the purest wax. Upon a walnut sidepiece a massive candelabrum threw out six silver arms. Above the fireplace were arranged curious ornaments of Indian manufacture, intermingled with vases covered in gross designs. The pictures, all of them new and staring, were suggestive ; such as Actæon watching Diana, Jupiter embracing Leda, Venus in the arms of Adonis. The traveller

- appeared to have forgotten the absent master of this indecent splendour.

"Why, Mr. Barclay! My dear Mr. Barclay! This is a very extraordinary and unlooked for happiness, I do assure you, Mr. Barclay!"

With this welcome Jacob strutted in, looking yet more meagre in his warm magnificence.

"Sir, I am much gratified," replied the traveller.

"Sir, I have not seen such splendour out of London. This beautiful harpsichord! This painted ceiling—a nymph entwining the stem of an apple-tree with a serpent!"

"The old story, my dear sir! Eve and the enemy of mankind. Religion, sir—we must keep that before us in our houses. This parish is now in a turmoil over a new craze. A mad preacher, sir, wandered into Moyle, to preach new doctrines—rank stuff and blasphemous. He redecorated the table of the ten commandments, sir, after his own design; and now—if you can believe me—the poor fools are tumbling one over the other in their eagerness to be baptised into a new faith. Sir, we gentlemen must smile at such simplicity."

"The view of this handsome apartment is indeed exquisite!" exclaimed the traveller. "The lights reflect from one mirror to another in an endless vista. What elegant porcelain! What chaste designs! Sir, you are no ordinary country gentleman."

"I believe not, sir," said the gratified attorney. "I am a man of substance, I promise you. You will crack a bottle, Mr. Barclay? Perhaps, sir, you will honour my table—a little supper, a cold fowl, and half-a-dozen of claret?"

"Sir, I am indebted to you already," said the traveller, bowing. "Let me explain to you at once the nature of my business; for it is now night and I am not yet provided with a place of shelter. You will allow me to remark I am a gentleman of fortune."

"Say no more, sir. One gentleman will tell another

at a glance. You will lie here to-night, Mr. Barclay. I will hear no denial. I go to order your room to be prepared—and the wine, sir. Ah, Mr. Barclay! A three-bottle man, I warrant ye!”

“Sir, your hospitality overwhelms me. My business is of the highest importance, else I would not have waited upon you at this most unusual hour.”

Again the traveller found himself alone, but only for a few moments. Two servants entered, spread a table with cold meats and glasses, and placed three flagons beside each chair. Then the master returned, proffered an elegant snuff-box, and begged the gentleman to draw towards the table.

“Small talk for meat, sir. Business with the wine,” said he; and forthwith led the way; but Jacob’s small talk mainly concerned great people.

Supper being over, and the cloth removed to reveal a dark and shining circle of mahogany, Jacob filled the long glasses and toasted the gentleman before settling in his chair. The traveller also rose and responded with a few compliments; then leaned across the mirror-like table, and came to matters of importance.

“You behold, sir, one who is more accustomed to deeds than words; and will therefore tell a tedious story in a sentence. Although I am of English parentage, my life has been spent in the Colony of Virginia, where my father settled in his youth to grow the tobacco-plant.”

“An excellent weed!” cried Jacob.

“You speak truly,” said Mr. Barclay, producing a large pocket-book, and flashing across the attorney’s eyes a silver crest. “I have here, sir,” he continued, “letters of credit from wholesale houses, both in Bristol and Plymouth, which I shall be pleased to lay before you.”

Jacob waved aside these witnesses with a gesture of perfect breeding.

“These notes, sir, represent in the paper-money of

my colony, a sum of five thousand pounds. I would have you know, sir, my father perished more than twenty years ago, possessed of a large fortune, which I have since succeeded in doubling. But, alas, sir, what is wealth to a man who has lost all those who are near and dear to him, even though he may not have gazed upon them with the eyes of consciousness ? ”

“ Sir, it is nothing,” cried Jacob warmly.

“ Nothing whatever, sir,” said Mr. Barclay with a groan. “ And now to my story. Long ago, when I was a child of eighteen months, my beloved parents abandoned me to the care of devoted servants, and departed for England, with a natural and pious longing to see their native land once more. Sir, they were not heard of again. The ship in which they travelled was wrecked, and it is supposed all hands were lost.”

“ Was the vessel cast away upon this shore ? ”

“ It was, sir,” said Mr. Barclay, resting his head a moment upon his arm. “ I was left with the overseer and his wife, a most worthy English couple, who watched over me with parental care, and saw to it that I received an education befitting my wealth and station. They acted upon the instructions of my parental grandparents ; who resided in the county of Norfolk until I had attained the age of seventeen ; then both passed away within a year of each other ; and I was left alone, for my father was an only child, and of my mother’s relations I can tell you nothing, for I do not even know her maiden name. And now, sir, I come to the curious part of my narrative. Little more than a year ago an old negro woman, who had nursed me as an infant, was seized with a fatal illness ; and before passing away she informed me that a child had been born to my parents a short time previous to their departure. I had not been told of this by my kindly guardians, for they had not wished to add to my distress ; and they had instructed the other servants to keep the information from me.”

"Your worthy grandparents, sir—did not they mention it?" asked Jacob.

"The old negro woman told me, sir, that they knew nothing; for my father wished to gratify his parents by appearing before them on their birthday—they had been born upon the same day—and offering his infant daughter as a present. And she too, sir—she too was cast away."

"There is many a wreck upon this Cornish coast. Many a brave life is thrown away each storm," said Jacob sadly.

"You will ask, sir, what business I have in coming to consult you," resumed Mr. Barclay. "I am now to make this clear to you. After the death of the old negro woman I was much troubled by dreams and visions. An aged native, who was said to possess the gift known to the Scottish as second sight, assured me that my sister was alive."

"Ah!" exclaimed Jacob.

"Sir, do I astonish you?"

"Ay, sir."

"I am glad of it. After this warning, which was many times repeated, my mind became so disturbed that at last I decided to take a holiday and come to England. I was desirous of making the fullest inquiries concerning the fate of my sister. Besides, sir, I was eager to behold this great and noble country of my ancestors. After so many years I was unable to discover the name of the ill-fated vessel; but I had heard often how she had been cast away upon this Cornish coast. So I worked upon that hint and starting from Padstow, after my safe arrival in Bristol, I proceeded westerly along this rugged shore. In the adjoining parish, where I arrived at noon to-day, I was given to understand by an old fisherman that, more than twenty years ago, a lady clasping her infant daughter had been cast up from a wreck in this parish of Moyle; and he believed the infant had survived. I hastened

forward at once, and, having been informed that you, sir, were the gentleman most likely to give me information, I came with all speed to your house. Such is my story. Permit me to add that, if my sister lives, I shall award to the man who saved her life a handsome fortune."

Jacob sat like a wooden image, his face shielded by one lean hand, his eyes fixed upon the carpet. Of all the problems which had ever racked his mind, this was a thousand times the hardest.

"Sir, I fear your silence condemns me to despair," said Mr. Barclay.

Still Jacob could not find the words. Schemes flashed through his brain and were rejected; yet speech was demanded of him. The story of Ruth was known. The brother had only to question any elderly parishioner to be told how the mother and babe had been cast up in Moyle harbour, how Master Grambla had saved the child, called her his daughter, and adopted her as kitchen slave. But there was another story, which the parishioners did not know, and that weighed most heavily upon his mind.

"Sir, I await your answer."

Slowly Jacob rose to his feet, cursing his folly at having drank too much. Unable to face the visitor, he gazed upon the pond-like surface of the table, and answered heavily, "The sorrow of your story made me dumb. Never to have seen your parents, sir—to have been separated all these years from a darling sister! Sir, I am not the man to listen to a tragedy unmoved. To-morrow we shall talk more soberly. To-night—what shall I say but this?—your sister lives and is well. These hands drew your mother from the sea. These arms carried her infant daughter to my house. Sir, she has lived with me all these years, and—to my shame—I allowed the child to perform slight household duties."

"My sister! My Maud! So I have found thee at

length ! ” cried Mr. Barclay. “ Ah, sir ! suffer me to kiss the hand which saved my sister.”

“ I can say no more—I am much moved. Let us rest now, and talk to-morrow,” Jacob mumbled.

“ Where is my sister ? ”

“ In this parish. You shall see her in the morning. She is, I suppose, a young lady of fortune ? ”

“ I shall at once present her with a fortune of twenty thousand pounds. And you, sir—how shall I reward a wealthy gentleman ? ”

“ Sir, let me light you to your chamber,” Jacob whispered.

Mr. Barclay slept soundly in the luxurious guest-chamber ; but the master never closed his eyes that night.

CHAPTER III

JACOB PLAYS A GAME OF FIND THE LADY

THE attorney was out of his room before the cock-crow. Mr. Barclay descended the stairs not long after sunrise, to inform the butler an early walk was necessary for his health, and it was never his custom to take breakfast until the clock had gone ten. This fine gentleman then passed out upon a terrace in making, and interrogated a gardener who was at work already :

" Whose are those woods I see yonder ? "

" They belong, sir, to the lord of Bezurrel," came the answer.

" Are they inhabited ? "

" By a gamekeeper and water-bailiff, sir ; and by Master John Clabar and his son."

" Who are these Clabars ? "

" They owned Coinagehall, sir, before Master Grambla bought it of them. John Clabar was once a gentleman, sir, and 'tis said his son is likely to become one."

" What manner of men are they ? "

" John is silent and brooding. Young Peter is like nobody else in the world, for he has the face of a woman and the strength of a man. He is included among our Cornish wonders, of which we have many. He has now reached his twenty-second year, and uses his hands as well as any man ; yet he grows no beard. He is a scholar, and 'tis said there is some magic in his nature."

"I would see this prodigy. Where is the house?"

"Enter Bezurrel Woods, sir, and follow the stream until you find it."

Leaving the intelligent gardener, Mr. Barclay walked on, smiling at the parterres and verdant images; crossed the fields; and descended to the woods, which appeared to recede as he advanced owing to the nature of the ground. He smiled again when his feet trod the moss, and his head was covered by a bower of roses. Indeed, the beauty of these woods was so much to his taste that he threw back his head and sought to imitate the music of the birds; but his song reached an end when he came to a clearing; where he saw a cottage with a fenced-in garden and, leaning over the rustic gate, a magnificent youth bareheaded, with brown hands and white throat and the sunshine pouring on his golden curls.

"Welcome to Halcyon," said Cherry.

"Young gentleman, I greet you," replied the traveller. "Welcome is a good word, to which I am but little accustomed. The name of this place I have not heard before."

"You are welcome," said Cherry. "For you came along the right road."

"I saw no other way."

"One is closed, and yet most people find it. There is a sorrowful pathway, and a happy pathway, to every home. I heard you singing in the wood, therefore I knew you were coming the right way. Because you are happy I give you welcome. Because you are free from sorrow you may have the liberty of my home which we call Halcyon; for that word means happiness."

"Are you not Mr. Peter Clabar?"

"I see you have heard of me, happy man. Nay, do not protest! There are a great number of sour-faces who would approach by the way that is closed. They would groan horribly among these trees and

flowers. Should they gain heaven, they will groan there too, I warrant."

"This is a fair garden indeed," said Mr. Barclay. "I knew not so many different kinds of flower existed."

"Snow-flowers and storm-flowers are past. These you behold are cuckoo-flowers."

"Have they no other name?"

"Plenty to wise men, but no other to my ignorance. Here is a cuckoo-flower, and here another. They blow when the cuckoo cries, and that is all I know about them. Snow-flowers come and go in winter. Storm-flowers visit us in March."

"By my soul, a good place in the summer-time!" cried the traveller.

"A good place in every season. There are pleasures of winter also, happy man. When the rain beats down, and the wind is hunting, we close the shutters, sit by the fire of logs—for we have permission to make use of fallen timber—and read old books. What greater comfort is there than a well-warmed room? What happier thing than an ancient book? When frost clears the air, we look out upon the stars and wonder; and to wonder is another form of happiness. When snow lies upon the ground, and crystals shine upon the trees, we admire; and admiration is another form of happiness. Every season is the happiest in Halcyon. Each day is better than the last."

"Young gentleman, you seem to me to have no ill-opinion of yourself."

"Good opinion is not always pride," said Cherry. "I should be wrong to think ill of myself, or of my neighbours; for nothing that is ill can be a form of happiness. And now, sir, will you not tell me what brings you to Bezurrel Woods; for I believe you are a stranger in this country?"

"I came yesterday in search of information concerning my sister, who was cast upon this shore when

an infant many years ago. I was directed to Jacob Grambla ; and I lay last night at Coinagehall."

"This is news indeed !" said Cherry. "May I implore you, sir, not to trust the lawyer?"

"I thank you for the warning," said Mr. Barclay. "I have some knowledge of the human countenance ; and by that alone I do not trust the lawyer."

"Ruth is then your sister—happy maid !"

"Ruth is she called ?"

"I see the serpent has deceived you."

"He has told me nothing, save that my sister lives and is well, and dwells within this parish."

"He means mischief to the maid—whom I know well he hates. You will find whichever way you move, he has a net spread for you. Ruth serves at Bezurrel Castle as maid to my Lady Just."

"Young gentleman, I thank you," cried the traveller.

"I should rather thank you for walking through the wood with a song of the morning and a shining lover's face."

"I thank you for the information."

"Which you came here to find."

"I descend from a house of lies to a cottage of truth," said happy Mr. Barclay.

"Nay, truth dwells in a palace. Come, sir, will you pluck cuckoo-flowers of various colours and make a posy ? I go presently to Bezurrel chapel for the Mass, and will carry the posy to your sister."

"Is she a papist ?"

"She steers towards the very opposite pole of the heavens. Moyle is gone out of its senses by the coming of a preacher ; its folk are fallen into the whirlpool of a new religion which has already made them so giddy they cannot stand upright ; and Mistress Ruth has fallen into the midst of it herself. I believe you are come in good time, for Sir Thomas and my lady abhor these nonconformists, and your sister grows unpopular at Bezurrel."

"It is well then that I have come to remove her, more especially as I myself favour the nonconformists. But if you carry a posy to my sister, how shall she know who sends it?"

"There is a language of flowers. Every maid can hear them speaking, 'I have a message for you,' 'I love you,' 'Will you come with me?'"

"You speak like a maid!"

"I am the laughing interpreter of the silent flowers. Every maid, I assure you, can read blossoms. But for greater security you may add eloquence to their fragrance by hiding a letter within the posy."

"Well thought of indeed!" cried Mr. Barclay. "Yet can I be certain the letter will reach my sister?"

"When you give it to me, you may reckon it is already in Ruth's hands. Come, sir! will you enter our cottage and write to your sister?"

"Young gentleman," said the traveller, with great earnestness, "my sister and I shall ever afterwards regard you as our kindest friend."

"I hope, sir, you are a gentleman of fortune?" said Cherry, as she opened the gate for him.

"My possessions are vast indeed. Many a Nabob of the Indies might feel envious of my wealth. I am young, I am strong, I have fine health," replied Mr. Barclay.

Later he apologised for the unconscionable time he sat a-writing, although Cherry could not wonder at it; for a knowledge of spelling was not then regarded as an elegant accomplishment, and the greatest gentry of the land were awkward with the pen. But she was forced to conclude his labours by the warning, "When the sun stands over that oak, 'tis eight by the clock. You see he is almost there."

Soon they set out together through the wood, and came presently into a lane opposite a Cornish stile, where it was necessary to part.

"Your way lies along this lane," said she. "I wish you good-fortune and many halcyon-days."

"I propose to return with my sister to the Palace of Truth," said Mr. Barclay. "If I am prevented from doing so, and should we meet no more, the memory of this kindness shall ever remain as a portion of my life. I have here two rings. One I shall present to my dear sister. The other I beg of your acceptance."

"It is a woman's ring!" cried Cherry.

"I would have you offer it to the maiden you like best."

"I will do so—and I thank you," she said; and slipping the ring upon her little finger, and carrying the bright posy which contained the hidden letter, she passed into Bezurrel Park. While Mr. Barclay loitered in the lane, and wandered by slow stages to breakfast, Coinagehall, and Jacob Grambla.

The attorney called the servants himself, and, having entered the kitchen when they were assembled, ordered two maids to wait upon him in the second saloon; which was the room where he had slept before the coming of Red Cap; and was now used as a place of reception for such unimportant parishioners as Master Toby, who could not be allowed to tread the carpet of the first saloon. This was simply furnished—to suit the tastes of the meaner kind of folk who entered it—with plain chairs and tables, groups of waxen fruit, stuffed birds and beasts, while all the pictures were religious; since only great folk could understand high art in the form of suggestive paintings and indecent porcelain. Here Jacob questioned the two maidens; and presently dismissed the one, but retained the other a great while; and after that he waited for his guest. Who came strolling through the fantastic garden as one with an unblemished title to the place; handed hat and cane to the butler with an air of master; then wandered into the dining-room like a lord. Jacob sprang towards him uttering fulsome words, led him

to a chair, served him with meat and ale ; but could not help noticing that the handsome gentleman was somewhat cold.

"I fear, sir, the meanness of my house, and the poverty of my conversation, do not please you," he said humbly. "Yet consider, sir, we country gentlemen are little accustomed to entertain a prince of commerce."

"To be plain with you, sir, I did not like your manner when you left me. You maintain silence, you hold me in suspense all night, you make me feel all is not well with my dear sister," said Mr. Barclay.

"Sir, I was agitated," replied Jacob. "I do not know whether you have spoke to anyone this morning?"

"I wandered into the woods and came by chance upon a strapping youth whose form reminded me of certain statues I have seen."

"A dangerous fellow, I assure you. A lying fellow. I trust you did not disclose yourself to him?"

"I did not tell him my name."

"I am glad of it. That is a fellow who would make much mischief. I hope, sir, the ale is to your taste?"

"I have seldom tasted better."

"I had a hand in the brewing of it. A master should not consider any detail too small for his attention. I could tell you the number of coverings upon each bed, and the precise amount of fuel consumed each day upon these premises."

"Sir, I must again be plain with you," cried Mr. Barclay. "I consider you trifle with me."

There came a fine bustling outside ; then a post-chaise drew up at the porch. The gentleman looked out and saw a groom leading his horse across the gravel.

"You will perceive," said Jacob heavily, "that I am unable to shake off the agitation which troubled me last night. Your sister, sir—I address myself boldly to the facts."

"Why is my horse led out? What means this post-chaise?"

"The horse, sir, is brought in readiness for a journey which we must take this morning. The chaise contains your sister."

Mr. Barclay rose and would have made for the door, but Jacob placed a deferential hand upon his arm and begged him to remain.

"I desire you not to show yourself till you have heard me."

"Why does she not run to me—her brother?"

"She has not even heard of your existence," declared Jacob. "Sir, I desire you to be calm, and listen. You feared by my manner that all is not well with your sister."

"Do not tell me," cried Mr. Barclay, "she has contracted a marriage with some clown."

"Nay, sir! No better and no worse as things go in the world. I have told you how I rescued the poor infant from the sea. I have told you how I brought her to this house and permitted her to take a part in household duties. Sir, do not blame me if I gave her no education, and used her in a fashion not suited to her birth; for I was not to know she was a lady born, nor could I tell she would be claimed. Besides, sir, had she been my daughter, I could have done but little for the child, since ease of fortune did not reach me till last year. So your sister grew up in my house, an ordinary country wench; somewhat rough, a trifle careless—and unthinking."

"Well, sir!" said Mr. Barclay sternly, when the lawyer hesitated.

"Sir, there is many a country wench somewhat loose in principle. I say no more."

"I begin to understand you. I pray you tell me all," said Mr. Barclay, still more coldly.

"Last year I was forced by her conduct—to which I will not give the name of wantonness—to find her

a lodging elsewhere. I assure you, sir, she has been well looked after. In pity, and not I swear without devotion, I offered to take the shame upon myself—you will not mock me because I am plain in face and mean in figure. She scorned me. 'Better hunger as a partner than you for a husband,' she cried at me. I cast no blame against her. Yet I had saved that life ! ”

“ Is there no more to add ? ” asked Mr. Barclay.

“ This only : I mention a little mound in the churchyard to ease your mind. The whole of Moyle knows this sad story. Scandal, sir, travels post free. I would desire you to leave this place immediately. Your business here must otherwise be known, and your honoured name will become dragged in the mire. The carriage waits. Let us ride to the next town ; and there—in the peaceful seclusion of some inn—I shall resign my charge ; or shall remain—if that be your pleasure—to advise you further concerning such settlements you may desire to make upon your sister.”

“ I thank you for your care,” said Mr. Barclay. “ The honour of my name I value highly ; yet I would have you bear in mind that mud thrown in Moyle can never reach Virginia.”

“ Be not too sure,” said Jacob earnestly. “ Our young men are emigrating to that colony. 'Twould be a sad day if one came to your plantations and recognised Miss Barclay. Sir, the truth would be out before you could stop his mouth. Take my advice, and I promise you to keep this matter secret. After to-day the people of Moyle will see Miss Maud no more. They shall never be told her rightful name. Sir, I am greatly honoured by your company, yet what is there to detain you now in my poor house ? ”

Mr. Barclay moved from his chair with some uneasiness, saying as he drew out his pocket-book, “ Your eloquence convinces me. Yet, sir, I shall not trouble you to accompany us. I have thought of a better plan.

There are matters I am anxious to discuss with you ; for now that my sister has been restored I would make some provision for her future. Life is uncertain—I may be shot by some villainous highwayman upon the road to Devonshire. I shall therefore require you to prepare my will. Then, sir, I shall be much offended if you refuse to accept a sum of money of me. I would have you extend this noble mansion by building a wing at my expense. These various discussions will take time. I propose therefore to depart with my sister to the next town, and, after lodging her in some comfortable inn, to return and accept your hospitality some few days longer."

"Sir, you gratify me exceedingly," Jacob muttered. "Yet I could protect the honour of your name more surely by travelling with you."

"I shall not mention the name of my sister either to man or woman. One other matter, sir," said Mr. Barclay, passing some notes across the table. "I discover I am almost exhausted of my English money. Be good enough to present me with ten guineas, that I may settle with the post-boys and landlord of the inn ; and place this paper of my country in your strong-box against my coming."

"Will you not need a larger sum ?" said Jacob, collecting the notes with eager fingers ; then proceeding to unbutton his pocket, "I have here fifteen guineas and some silver. Sir, these notes are printed very ill."

"In my colony, sir, the arts are but little studied ; but we have the money and the skill will come. I beg you pass no hasty opinion upon these notes, for we young Americans are somewhat impatient of criticism. This gold will be sufficient. I thank you. And now, sir, present me to my sister."

"Will you not reveal yourself to her when you reach the country beyond Moyle ? Consider, sir ! My servants may put one and one together."

"She might not believe me. No, sir! Inform her, and send her in."

"Very good, sir. I will order the servants into the back premises. I may expect you, sir, this evening at dinner-time?"

"You may indeed expect me," replied Mr. Barclay.

Jacob hurried from the room, satisfied the plot was working, and not sorry in his heart to be spared a journey, for travelling in a post-chaise made him sick.

Mr. Barclay stood facing the window, until the door was pushed open timidly. He turned to behold a somewhat impudent country wench, who blushed and simpered, as she transferred her gaze from floor to ceiling and from wall to wall.

"Well, my dear! What name do they call you?" asked Mr. Barclay; then remembering that Jacob would be listening, he cried, "Do I indeed behold my long-lost sister?"

"They call me Ruth, an it please you, sir," the damsel stammered.

"It does not please me. Your name is Maud; and I am your brother, Mr. Francis Barclay."

"Master Grambla says you be my brother. Oh lor', sir, don't it seem funny?"

"You are a young gentlewoman, Maud; but I fear you have much to learn."

"Will ye give me pretty gowns, sir? And a carriage to drive in, sir? And a wench to wait upon me, sir?" demanded the pert damsel.

"We will talk of these things at some other time," said Mr. Barclay with a frown. "Now, Maud, will you come with me?"

"I'll come with you, sir, sure enough. I ain't so fond of Moyle I craves to bide. Lor', sir, I be a lucky maid, I reckon."

Mr. Barclay advanced, raised her podgy hand, and pressed his lips upon it; an action which disconcerted

the damsel, who had looked for a salutation far more ardent.

"Ain't you going to kiss me on the chops?" she muttered in her country dialect.

Mr. Barclay winced for answer. They walked out of the room, across the hall, and towards the waiting chaise; the wench signalling her transformation into a fine lady by turning up her nose at the post-boys; her escort glancing at his watch. Of Jacob there was nothing to be seen.

"What is the name of that hill yonder?" asked the gentleman, as he mounted his horse.

"Us calls it Great Gwentor, master," replied the groom.

They went off, but when clear of Coinagehall, the rider said to the post-boy nearest him, "Drive to the foot of Great Gwentor, for I have business in that neighbourhood."

CHAPTER IV

RUTH BEGINS TO TRAVEL

MASS being said, Sir Thomas and his lady retired into the library, which could be entered from the garden : a few minutes later Ruth was summoned to attend them. She came with a sinking of the heart ; for she feared, rather than loved, the lord of Bezurrel, in spite of his much kindness.

" Ruth," said he, " I saw you in the avenue holding a nosegay of wild flowers. Who is your lover ? "

" Peter Clabar, sir——" she began in a weak voice.

" What, Ruth—shy maid ! Have you been making eyes at our young sun-god ? " cried my lady.

" I know the flowers came from Clabar's garden," said Sir Thomas. " A posy, child, may convey a great deal from one hand to another. The single flower carries an innocent message ; but the nosegay is often guilty of conspiracy. What is that you try to conceal in the folds of your gown ? "

" If you please, sir, 'tis a letter."

" From young Apollo ! Oh, fie, Ruthie ! " laughed her ladyship.

" Let us not tease the maid," said her husband less sternly. " Be seated, Ruth, and tell us why young Peter brings you love-letters."

" Sir, I do not know."

" Have you any feeling of affection for him ? "

" Nothing more than the kindness of friendship, sir."

" Yet you have a lover. May not this letter be from him ? "

"Master Peter, sir, when he came to Mass, sent for me," said Ruth. "I found him waiting by the door of the chapel, holding a posy which he pushed into my hand, and told me to take it to my bedroom. 'There is a message,' he whispers. 'Tis from your brother.' But, sir, I cannot read."

"You have no brother," said Sir Thomas sharply.

"Give me the letter," cried Lady Just. "Come, Ruth, sit close to me, while I read it in your ear. This is an affair between women, Sir Thomas. You have no part in it."

"Nevertheless I shall remain to offer an opinion."

"A crest!" exclaimed her ladyship, as she looked at the seal. "Ruth, you become a maid of mystery."

"An owl," said the baronet, in the solemn manner of that bird. "'Tis the crest, I believe, of a family in Devonshire. But this paper I myself supplied to Peter. Therefore the letter was written in Halcyon cottage."

Lady Just broke the seal, glanced through the contents, frowning a little, then laughed aloud.

"Brother or lover, he is an ill scholar," she cried. "He signs no name and gives no explanation. Ruth, listen!"

"Read aloud, Manuela," her husband ordered.

So my lady read aloud:

"My dere little angel I am your brother as you shal understand when you meet me in the copse at 12 by the clock and noon by the sun and I am come for you at last and I shal be in the copse which is at the bottom of the fields of Coinagehall with a Horse to take you I got to Moyle about evening and I had supper with Grambler but I could not eat now I was so close to you and so got to Bed near midnight I lay at Coinagehall and I prayed for you my derest love and kissed your Derest Hare and laye down and drempt of you ten thousand times kissing you and telling you how much I

loved and adored you till you seemed pleased but alas when I woke I found it all dillusion no body but myself I rose by time at six and went to the woods there I found my Friend Peter and stayed with him and when I finish this Letter to you my dere love I go to brekfust at 10 clock always if nothing hinders me I shall be in the copse by Noon o my love mad and happy beyond myself to tell you how I love you I hope you are well I need not tell you I have nothing in my Thoughts I long for your Dereself and hope for the time to come dere Little Friend does angel of my Hart take care of her Dereself for the sake of your faithful Servant who lives but to adore you I hope my dere nay I will dare to say you never will have reason and you will not regret when the Time comes God bless you most Derest Little Creature living

now oft had — changed his sly disguise
unmarked by all save Luvvly Ruthies eyes
now he finds means alone to meet his Dame
and at her feet to breathe his amrus Flame

Now God bless you till 12 clock I have your Hart and it lies warm in my Breast I hope mine will feel easy Joy of my Life my Friend Peter says this will do."

My lady dropped her hands and looked at Ruth, whose cheeks were red as roses, saying, "The poor gentleman is no scholar with the pen, for he writes his romance in one unbroken sentence, and has your true lover's trick of careless spelling. Now, child, can you sign his name?"

"The name is Grambla. This is a trick to decoy the girl away, to sell her to some procuress," said Sir Thomas. "After breakfast I go to the woods, and learn from Peter who wrote this letter. Ruth, I charge you not to leave the house until I give you leave."

"Sir, I believe my Harry has come back."

"Your Harry, foolish child! Men of his sort make love to a different damsel every day."

"This is a genuine letter," cried my lady.

"Grambla copied it from some newspaper."

"Believe me, Sir Thomas, there are some honest poor gentlemen left in the world. May not this man be her brother?"

"It is impossible," he said. "Ruth, do you believe you were cast up by the sea, clasped in the arms of a dying mother?"

"Surely, sir," the girl whispered.

"You believe the word of Grambla?"

"No, sir; but I believe Mother Gothel. The whole of Moyle knows my sad story."

"The whole world has accepted a lie before to-day," replied Sir Thomas. "When Grambla calls you a nameless wench, he lies; and some day he shall own to it. You have neither brother nor sister; but you shall have name and place if you are patient and can trust in me. If, however, you throw yourself into the arms of a deceiver, look not to me for pity."

"Will you not tell me more, sir?" begged Ruth, forgetting all fear of her dark and dreadful master.

"No, child! I cannot speak yet without causing mischief. Nor have I yet concluded my reading of the stars. You are to obey me. Do not leave this house. I shall go to the copse to meet the writer of this letter. Remain with my lady, for she has much to say to you. No more self-will, Ruth. Your conduct of late displeases me."

Sir Thomas left the library, frowning more deeply than usual; while Ruth turned for sympathy to my lady, who had always been gentle with her; so that the girl found it hard to understand how that kind heart could love the works of darkness, and how those soft hands could play the harp at midnight to frighten evil spirits from her husband while he invoked the dead.

"Why is Sir Thomas angry with me?" she asked plaintively.

"Because you have joined yourself to these people who are enemies of all the churches," my lady answered. "I warned you, Ruth, to keep away from these blasphemers; yet you seek their company continually. I entreated you to become a member of the one true church—forbidden in this godless land—and you have answered by seeking a pagan baptism."

"Oh, my lady!" cried Ruth. "You and Sir Thomas have used me with the greatest kindness; you saved my life when I was driven out of Coinagehall; but you could not give me God, my lady."

"We sought to give you instruction, Ruth."

"I could not understand, my lady. I seemed to get further away from God; but now I am getting near. I go to the meetings, and I feel God is so near I could almost put out my hand and touch Him."

"Ruth, you are too young and foolish to know what this means. If you go on in this manner you will surely lose your senses. I hear already some women in this place are fit for Bedlam."

"My lady, 'tis because they feel themselves near God. They are inspired, madam, to explain the Scriptures. The blessed meetings, the prayers and preaching, have given me God, and I must keep Him—I cannot give Him up. I went down to be baptised, and when I was in the sea, my lady, I could behold the angels up in heaven——"

"Ruth! Ruth! No more," interrupted my lady, more near to being angry than the maid had ever seen her. "This must be put a stop to. I hear you often scream in your sleep, and sometimes believe yourself struggling with the devil; and you will even burst into prayer while you sit at table."

"I feel God is calling me to pray and to struggle—I must obey. Oh, my lady, may I not find God in my own poor way?"

"The first duty of a Christian maid is to obey those who are set over her; and if she persists in disobedience

they must punish her. When Sir Thomas heard of your wicked act in seeking baptism at the hand of the barber, he was so angry that he declared you should stay in this house no longer."

"Oh, my lady!"

"We have therefore decided to send you away."

"Dear lady, do not break my heart."

"Be not so foolish, child. Do you suppose we have it in us to forsake you altogether? Sir Thomas thinks it would be well for you to travel, and thus obtain a change of scene. You are in ill-health, Ruth, else you would not listen so readily to these blasphemers. It is also my will that you should go, for I am well aware the steward has lately troubled you with his attentions."

"My lady, I always run when I see him coming," said Ruth, beginning to sob.

"Ay, Ruthie, I know you are honest; but you need more strength of mind. We have known you are in danger from some plot of Grambla every time you leave Bezurrel. Nay, child, do not weep. I am sorry for the rudeness of my steward, but gentlemen are not to be held upon the curb."

"My lady, I feel I am destined to be ruined. I cannot find God now—you make the way so dark."

"Foolish child!" said my lady gently. "Dry your tears, and pray for a better courage. Listen, Ruth! Next week we send you to Plymouth town, into a house where you will be most kindly treated; the master and mistress are well known to Sir Thomas. In a town you will see many things which you do not dream of at the present; and there we hope you may learn to distinguish between true and false religion. We have also arranged for your education."

"Oh, my dear lady! Do not send me away," cried Ruth. "I fear the town. I fear still more to travel."

"These fears must be conquered," said her ladyship

with an air of coldness. "No more, Ruth! Go to your room and take your sewing. Mind also what Sir Thomas told you, and do not stir from the house until he gives you leave. Take your letter, but forget a brother wrote it. My dear child, you must set yourself to win a worthier lover."

My lady departed, while Ruth climbed sadly to her room, and prayed for a long while, but neglected to take her sewing; for, in spite of her recent baptism and her prayers, she was not in the mood to obey. She was a maiden, she was young, she was in love; and she had been commanded not to descend towards the copse and meet her lover. This was a tale which could have but one ending. So it seemed quite right that she should be putting on her best gown, and making her hair tidy, and placing her mother's trinket round her neck; nor could it be sinful to exhibit a little cunning, to step along the passages on tiptoe, to make a sudden rush for the side door, and a wild flight for the shelter of the shrubberies. The clock upon the stables marked eleven; therefore she had abundance of time, for the copse could be reached in twenty minutes' strolling; but Ruth remembered Sir Thomas proposed to keep the appointment in her stead; and then at last it dawned upon her she was sinning.

Yet she did not return, because she was a young maid and in love; to persevere in the act of disobedience seemed necessary. A lover was too good to lose; even a brother seemed worth gaining. So she drew more upon that wilful store of cunning and, turning from the copse, tripped merrily towards the only lane which led to it. Sir Thomas with all his magic could not outwit a simple maid in love.

So nimble were her feet that she reached the Pol-drifty road half an hour before noon; and at the turn she hid herself behind the hedge, murmuring, "A horseman must come this way. Sir Thomas declares

I have no brother. Who would call me Little Angel but my Harry ? ”

Although disobedient Ruth was at least in touch with nature, and she put out her head to consider the omens. Two magpies fluttered across the fields to drop into the copse ; and the girl was pleased, for they brought good tidings. “ Two magot-pies for mirth,” said she. “ The pied chatterers would never fall among those trees should any man be waiting there. Sir Thomas will not enter the copse till noon ; but the lover does not wait upon the clock. If he comes late, I may suspect some trick of Grambla. If he comes early, I shall see my Harry.”

Yet the rider was near before she heard him ; for he guided his horse along a strip of turf, proceeding slowly ; and he was no longer calm Mr. Barclay, but a nervous rascal who stood in the stirrups to gaze across the country. Ruth had gone upon her knees in vast confusion, for the sun dazzled her eyes so that she could not see the face of her cavalier—besides, the more distant brambles drew thorny lines across it. No mountebank would ride so fine a horse and wear such brilliant clothing.

Still there was something in the attitude of that figure which made her heart beat recklessly. The horseman came on until he was scarce a dozen yards away. Now the face was marvellously clear ! Ruth started up to rush towards him, but found herself held ; for, by taking the shortest way from the hiding-place, her gown had been caught by brambles.

“ My Ruthie ! ” cried the horseman, leaping from the saddle.

“ Oh, my love ! my love ! I have risked all to meet you. Deliver me from the thorns.”

“ My angel, do not tear your hands. Ruth, what in the name of miracles ! My child, what are you wearing ! My loveliest child, what duchess have you robbed ! ”

"Harry, what mean you? Oh, my love! let me feel your arms about me."

"Ruth! Ruth! Was ever maiden half so sweet as you! My angel! where did you find these jewels? How dare you walk abroad carrying a king's ransom round your neck?"

"Cut me free, Harry. But tell me first you love me."

"Love you! Ay, more than ever, sweeting. But Ruth!—the diamonds!"

"This trinket belonged to my mother. 'Tis worthless. Harry, how lovely you are! Look at me, not at my foolish ornament."

"I tell ye, sweetheart, you are worth a fortune of ten thousand pounds. Nay, trust your Harry to know fine jewellery when he sees it. Worth stealing in faith! Your face and fortune, Ruth, would tempt a lord."

"I believe you are mistaken, Harry. Mother Gothel gave me this necklet. Grambla left it upon my mother's body. I wear it to-day for the first time."

"Sweet Ruthie! You are no more lovely, but far more precious. Who has ever seen such jewels before? Not Grambla—he would have thought them worthless. See how they flash in the sunlight! There is indeed a fortune here! Sweetheart, pardon me! I am overpowered by the wealth of my young princess. I forgot how we are placed."

"And you forget how I stand held by these brambles," cried Ruth.

"This necklet must come off; else we may have our throats cut. Let me hide it in my pocket," said Cay, still almost unable to believe his eyes. "Ay, true stones! A fortune, Ruthie! Now we are provided for indeed!"

"Harry, if you do not pay more attention to me, I shall be angry with you."

"My angel, I hardly know what I am saying. I

come to seek a sweet poor maid, and find a wealthy lady. 'Tis fortunate indeed you have not worn these stones before. Sir Thomas and his lady would have known their worth. Ah, my love ! my life ! . . . And now I will cut you free."

"Harry, Sir Thomas waits for you in the copse. He forbade me to leave Bezurrel," she cried, as her excited fingers drew away the necklet.

"He shall not find us, I promise ye. Sweetheart, I rode into Moyle last night, accompanied by a worthy young friend of the medical profession, who has gone to the west, and hopes to escape in a fishing-boat to France, for he had the misfortune to administer a poisoned pill to a zealous constable in Devonshire. I go to Coinagehall and present myself to Grambla as a wealthy gentleman from America in search of his sister. I had in mind the story that you told me."

"You deceived him, my wonderful Harry !" cried Ruth, skipping down the bank with a bramble still trailing behind her. "Oh, that is famous ! Come, Harry ! tell me your story in kisses."

"Ay, I had him at the mercy of my little finger," said the young rogue presently, having by now slipped the string of diamonds in his pocket. "But the adventure led me further than I looked for. Sweetheart, I come here on a handsome horse, and wearing these fine clothes, which I neither bought nor paid for, yet without a single coin to pay my lodging. My story brings me as handsome an entertainment as I have ever known. This morning I pass to Grambla some worthless paper, which are to be had by the bundle at a certain place in London for a few pence, and obtained from him fifteen brave guineas. He then presents a raw country wench as my beloved sister, provides a post-chaise to carry us away, lest by staying I should discover his lies were no better than my own——"

"My Harry ! I wish you to tell no lies."

"I lied for you, my angel. Had I spoke the truth,

we should not stand here now. And the raw wench sits in the chaise, awaiting her brother—dreaming I doubt not of much such luxury—at the foot of Pol-drifty Downs.”

“Have you taken fifteen guineas from Grambla?”

“As many years as he stole from you.”

“He will swear a charge against you!”

“Sweetheart, I am not for the gallows. I have been under the shadow of the noose so long that now I laugh at justice as once I laughed at love,” said Cay, plucking the last bramble from her gown. “You and I were born to win a happy future.”

“You have but just appeared before me. And now you will vanish like a ghost. While I—oh, Harry! to lose you twice—this time perhaps for ever! And I dare not return to Bezurrel.”

“Nor shall you,” he cried, throwing his arms round her.

“Next week I go to Plymouth. Sir Thomas sends me away in anger because I am become a nonconformist.”

“Then I too am a nonconformist. Come, Ruthie! Let us away.”

“Where would you take me, Harry?”

“To the other side of England. To London, liberty, and a Fleet wedding. I’ll find a drunken parson who will tie the knot for half a crown.”

“Base Harry! Would you ruin me?”

“Nay, sweetheart, trust your life to me, and you shall never be a fallen angel. Think for a moment, love! It is now past noon. Any moment Sir Thomas and his men may pass this way; or the wench may take fright and run back to Grambla. To come here I faced death—ay, and laughed at it. Twice I rode for my life. Now I must be gone, and if I go without you, Ruthie, we may not meet again. Fortune is kind to a rogue twice; but at the third venture the jade frowns.”

"What have you done, Harry? How did you get this horse, and these fine clothes?"

"By my blistering-plasters, love, I promise you."

"Yet you have no money!"

"What do I need of money, now that you are a fortune of ten thousand pounds? Sweetheart, if we clear the country between here and Tavistock, a dirty little town in Devonshire where of late I have been practising—there I obtained this horse, these clothes, the ring I now press upon your finger, Ruthie mine, all in exchange for my famous blistering-plasters—if we get clear, I say, we will ride into Wiltshire; and there I shall go upon my knees before that disreputable scoundrel, my uncle, if he lives, and present you to him and make the grey hairs of his unmarried head stand stiff with jealousy. My little angel, this is the day of days in our two lives. Here is good sunshine all around us! Here is my horse—a strong beast who will carry us both, I warrant. Here are we two lovers, sighing to be one! When I am east, and you are west, what are we then?"

"Still lovers, Harry. Nay, I must not come with you."

"Then I remain," said the young man grimly. "We will pass the day together. This evening I am taken and brought before the justices. Next month the scum of Exeter shall be calling the last dying confession of Black Harry, hanged this morning."

"Shall you stay?" she cried in sudden terror.

"By my true love for you, I swear it. Choose whether you send me to the gallows, or come with me to life and happiness."

"Black Harry!" she whispered. "I know but little of the world, but that name means——"

"I told you as we parted in the copse."

"Oh, Harry! Did God make you strong and handsome that you might wear a mask upon the road and live by robbery?"

"God made me, love, to be a gentleman; but my base uncle appealed against the judgment—and he won."

"I love a robber!" she cried.

"Nay, child, a very harmless surgeon! 'Tis enough if you love him. You will save him. Shall we walk that way—or ride this way? I see your glance goes eastward, sweetest Ruth."

When Sir Thomas returned to Bezurrel his face was dark with anger. Finding my lady in the drawing-room, with Martin her younger son, he came to her side and said, "Manuela, our discipline has failed."

"I know that Ruth has left the house," she answered.

"She has now left the parish. Like many a maid, she chooses a life of shame because the devil is a handsome fellow when he plays at love. From a place of hiding I watched these precious lovers. Even then I could have held Ruth back, but would not. Labour is wasted upon a maid sentenced by destiny to ruin. Her lover is a highwayman, and she has gone with him."

CHAPTER V

THE QUACK DOCTOR SWEARS TO AMEND

THE direct road was closed to the fugitives by the waiting post-chaise.

"Besides," said Cay, "I dare not pass into Devonshire by way of Launceston; for between that town and Dartmoor I have earned some fame. By crossing the southern slopes of this moorland we shall reach the lower road where I am likely to be regarded as a very decent fellow. To-morrow evening we arrive at Plymouth; and there we stay two days to rest the horse."

"How well he goes beneath a double burden!" said Ruth; who was shivering with happiness and excitement.

"He carries fame and fortune, love," cried Cay. "Fame is light, while fortune is a feather. See! there is the tower of Bezurrel Castle among the trees. Sing your farewell to Moyle, my angel."

"I am looking at that other tower," said Ruth, as she pointed to the church. "My mother's grave is there. I shall return to that."

Scarcely had they reached the high country when a shout reached their ears. Standing in the stirrups, Cay perceived a horseman riding at full speed towards them. He frowned and thrust a hand into his pocket; but it came out empty and was soon waving to a friend.

"'Tis old Jack, who came here with me," he explained. "A very honest fellow, whom I would trust with my life; but not with my mistress, nor my purse. Why, Jack, old lad, what do you here?" he called. "I thought you were safe in Penzance town by now."

"No further west for me," cried the other, who was a fellow of desperate appearance. "So, Harry, my son, you have limed the bird; and, by my soul, a pretty blackbird. Your servant, mistress."

"A beastly fellow," was Ruth's whispered comment.

"We must ride, old lad. Are you with us?" said Cay.

"Ay, for half a mile. I came on the chance of finding you, and discovered instead a post-chaise waiting on the other side of this hill. A wench puts her head out of the window, and cries, 'La, brother, what a time you keep me waiting!' 'Sorry, my love,' say I, as I ride up and kiss her—I like a country wench with blood in her face. 'You ain't my brother,' she screams. 'If you mean Harry,' I say, 'he's still gone sister-hunting. He finds you won't do, my love.' Then I say to the post-boys, 'The wrong bird is in the trap, young rascals.'"

"You were always a bit too easy with your tongue," Cay grumbled.

"Why, lad, you are safe enough. You have the prize, and there's no dodger in the land to beat you. The post-boys looked blue, I tell ye. They thought I was going to slit their throats and take their horses. So they ride off with the chaise and wench as hard as they can go."

"Grambla knows already. We shall be followed," cried Ruth.

"There's no horse in this parish to catch that beauty," said the wild rogue. "Your Harry, mistress, is never a happy man unless he has two or three constables hunting him. A pretty horseman, mistress, and a shapely fellow. Ay, and a kind-hearted gentleman! Would rather be taken pulling off tight rings, than cut 'em off with the fingers. And he'll go to the gallows like a buck, carrying a posy and kissing his hand to the ladies. May we swing side by side, old lad! Do you make for Plymouth?"

"Ay," replied Cay shortly.

"Look for me in the old place. Yonder you descend, and there I turn and make for the Launceston road. They will follow that way. I'll draw them after me, and fool them north while you go south."

"Jack, you are mad to run your head into the noose. Turn again to the west, my son."

"East is best for me," cried the rogue. "After leaving you I ran into a prayer-meeting, where I was converted in less time than it takes to tell. And a kind fool takes me home with him, and we sing a hymn before we go to bed. 'Brother, here's to ye,' says my host. 'Sin no more.' 'I won't,' say I. 'I'll sell my horse and buy a pedlar's basket.'"

"Do so," said Ruth earnestly. "And God will bless you."

"Maybe, mistress, but I desire my blessings now," cried the careless rogue. "I cannot face the west. 'Tis a cold and barren country, full of miners and fishermen as foul in their habits as the swine. A gentleman does not mix with such. Think you, Harry, if I could get across to France I should be happy? I am for cloudy Devonshire and the old road again. Nay, I have no craving for old age. I have lived thirty years; I have drunk, robbed, and killed—'tis a merry life. I'll back to the old road, and take a purse to-night if it's the last. Harry, good-bye! To-day we live!"

"Good-bye, old Jack!"

"And to-morrow we swing! Farewell, mistress. If you bear a son, strangle him, for if you let him live he'll break your heart. Had my mother strangled me she might be living now."

The fellow rode off towards the north, but the others did not follow his flight; for their way descended the moorland and caution was necessary. But soon they were in the lane, and here Cay breathed more easily; for it was unlikely that Grambla would guess they had gone east by the longer road, and before passers-by could bring him information they would have got away.

Hardly a word passed until two parishes lay between them and Moyle ; then Ruth bestirred herself to lecture the young man sharply. Had she been left behind she would have wept ; had they been together for only a short time, she would have been most yielding ; but now that there was no immediate prospect of separation, she brought Harry to book upon his past misdeeds, demanded many a solemn promise concerning the future, and in short behaved as a woman will when sure of her man's affection and his company.

" My Ruthie, what could I have done when cast out by my uncle ? " he pleaded.

" Sunk your pride, Harry, and become the servant of some gentleman."

" The first time my master abused me, I should have struck him."

" You could have turned porter."

" That needs no skill but much strength ; whereas I have much skill and little strength."

" Or served in some shop."

" I should have courted the rich damsels who came to buy silks and laces. Nay, sweetheart, when a young gentleman is poor and friendless, there is nothing for him but the road. But after to-day I'll take no more purses."

" Nor make a blistering-plaster ! "

" I sold them once. That was at least an honourable occupation."

" To lie money out of people's pockets ! "

" They were good hot plasters, I swear. Yet I found a mixture of nitre and saltpetre behind the barrel of a pistol unbuttoned pockets quicker. Eh, Ruthie, I have been a sad dog, but I'll not follow shy Jack to the Launceston road. You have saved my body. Now you shall save my soul."

" Shy Jack ! Why do you so name that beastly fellow ? "

" He boasts, ten years ago, a wench made him blush. 'Tis a story I do not believe."

"Nor I," said Ruth. "Harry, is it your earnest desire to be saved?"

"Why, sweetheart, they say when a man's body is put into the ground, that is not the end of him. I know not whether to believe in heaven and hell, but this I do know: if preachers speak truth, I would rather find myself in heaven with you, than in hell with my late comrades. 'Tis true I should meet with friends in both these places; but heaven has my heart when Ruth goes there."

"You jest, Harry!"

"Not I, my love"

"When did you last pray?"

"When I was a child, frightened at the darkness."

"Did you not pray when you found yourself homeless?"

"I was too full of curses."

"Harry, let us pray now."

"I know not what to say," he muttered.

"Repeat the words after me. We may pray upon horseback as well as in a church."

Then she recited the Lord's prayer and the creed, while Cay mumbled the sentences after her. Presently Ruth offered an extempore prayer in the new style; in which she implored forgiveness of Harry's sins, and pardon for any she might have committed since her recent baptism; the act of disobedience that day troubling her conscience a little. And then she asked simply, "Harry, do you not feel easier now?"

"Ay, sweetheart," he said seriously. "I doubt whether prayers be answered, yet it does a man good to pray."

"You must be baptised," she said, getting somewhat hysterical. "Why should I not myself baptise you?"

"I would as lief be baptised by you as by the Archbishop of Canterbury," declared Cay. "Come, sweetheart, who is jesting now?"

"I do not jest," cried Ruth. "Harry, you and I belong to the nonconformists. We do not allow the clergy to keep the rites and ceremonies to themselves. We believe in a second baptism—ay, and a third, if it be needful. And we know all our sins are washed away by this act of baptism. I went down into the sea, yesterday was sennight, and Master Honey dipped me under the water; and when I came out—oh, Harry! I could see a glory in the sky, and God seemed to draw me up in His arms, and to breathe upon me, and to say, 'Ruth, Ruth, you are Mine now.' Glory be to God, Harry! Glory! Glory! We are to be saved for ever."

"My sweetheart, calm yourself. Had the horse plunged then, you must have fallen."

"I have found God, Harry. I shall know no rest till you have found Him too. Stop at the first water! Let us get down, and I will baptise you. Cannot I give you God as well as a man? Then you will be free from Satan, Harry—pure in soul and body as a child. Repent, my love! Repent! Repeat after me, 'Glory to God,' until your whole body begins to glow and the tears run down your cheeks."

"I do repent," muttered the young man, feeling for the first time this new fanaticism then rising in the west. "I know myself for a miserable wretch. I will seek baptism—with an honest soul, I promise. Oh, glory, glory! Ruth, my love! Your arms are burning round me."

"You are getting near God. He is coming down to you," she cried wildly. "This is my Harry. I bring him! I have him fast! Hold on! Oh, my love, hold on!"

They clung together and shed tears; kissed each other passionately, and groaned in their zeal, until some countryfolk passed and jeered. They perceived they were drawing near a village, having just descended a steep and dangerous hill without much knowledge of it. So they became again composed and went on steadily.

"I had a feeling come over me then," said Cay, "as if I could never do ill again."

"I get that feeling when I attend the meetings," said Ruth. "It was God coming near you, Harry. Now I know you are in a fit state for baptism."

"Think you, sweetheart, I may begin life again, as a new man without a sin against me?"

"I am most sure of it."

"Would that the law might be brought to accept this doctrine," he muttered. Then remembering they were not out to enjoy a day's excursion, he took a glance behind; and the same moment the new religion was forgotten.

"See!" he cried. "Two horsemen ride over the brow of the hill."

"I see them," replied Ruth. "They do not pursue us, for they go slowly."

"I know the form of that man upon the left," said Cay, beginning to drive the willing horse. "They come from Moyle, I swear. But I believe they have no wish to harm us. One of the horses carries a weighty pack."

As they rode on their spirits rose because fortune seemed to favour them. Generous weather made them glad, the wind was behind, and they were strangers in that land. The two horsemen dropped back until they disappeared from sight. So Harry and his maid went on, and when it was late in the afternoon they overtook a quiet countryman jogging along upon an unclipped beast.

"A good day to you, friend," cried Cay. "Do you go to the town of Liskeard?"

"A good day to you, young sir; and to you, young mistress," replied the countryman.

"It is a good day," said Ruth.

"I am glad to hear it," said the man. "It is a very good day for me. I do not go to the town of Liskeard. I am almost home."

"Have you come a long journey?" asked Cay.

"Ay, sir. I travelled to Ludgvan church-town, and now am returning to my wife."

"You are a merry fellow, I can see," said Cay.

"You would not be lonely upon the road, so you carry with you a large flagon of good ale."

"Nay, sir, this flagon contains what I went forth to find."

"What is that, friend?"

"Water, sir. You see I am safe upon the road; for my purse is empty, and no man would rob me of a flagon of water."

"Did you say you come from Ludgvan town?" asked Ruth in great excitement.

"Ay, mistress; I did say so," replied the countryman.

"Then you carry water from St. Ludgvan's well?"

"I perceive, mistress, you are a Cornish lady."

"Harry!" cried Ruth. "God is with us indeed. Oh, sir, you will sell this gentleman a cupful of that water."

"What mean you, sweetheart?"

"The man or woman baptised with this water from St. Ludgvan's well cannot be hanged."

"You are mistaken, mistress," said the countryman.

"The man who has been baptised as a child with this water cannot indeed be hanged by a cord of hemp; but the water has no power upon a cord of silk. I was born in Ludgvan church-town, and baptised with water from the holy well. I left my native town and came into this country when I married. Last week a son was born to us, so I follow the custom of my people, and ride to Ludgvan that I may fill my flagon from the holy well. The curate will baptise my babe on Sunday with this water."

"Is this a true tale?" said Cay.

"Ah, sir, I perceive you are no Cornishman."

"True, indeed," cried Ruth. "Even I, who am so

ignorant, know of the power of St. Ludgvan's well. Oh, sir ! give me a little of that water."

" You have a babe at home, young mistress. You desire to make him safe against the rope."

" By heaven, I must have that water ! " cried Cay so fiercely that the timid countryman turned pale and clapped a hand upon his flagon. " Nay, sir, I am no robber, yet I am a better man than you. I must have a pint of that precious water. I will give you a guinea for a cupful."

" I perceive you are stronger than myself," said the countryman. " Should we fight, the flagon might be broken ; then all would be losers. As you are well mounted, why do you not ride to St. Ludgvan's well and obtain the precious water for your child ? "

" We are pressing to the east. We cannot make the long journey westward to St. Ludgvan. I have no child, friend. I belong to the nonconformists, and I require this water for my baptism."

" Sir, you have been baptised."

" Into the church without my consent. We believe that is no baptism."

" I have heard of the people called nonconformists," said the countryman in a surly fashion. " But I thank God they have not yet come into the parish where I dwell. To my mind they are infidels and blasphemers."

" They will fill your soul with joy and light," began Ruth ; but Cay checked her ; then addressed himself again to the countryman, who desired to get away from such dangerous fanatics, of whom the man had plainly committed some crime since he went in terror of the hangman.

" Friend, be assured I would not rob you ; but I pray for a little of that water, which you can well spare, for your flagon is large ; and you shall go upon your way the richer by a guinea."

" Would you have me send out the curate to baptise you ? " scoffed the countryman.

"My young mistress will baptise me."

"This is the greatest blasphemy I ever heard of. Now I am sure you nonconformists are children of the devil. Should I baptise you, sir, that would be rank blasphemy; for you are a grown man, and I am indeed no minister. But if the young lady baptises you—that, sir, is the sin which can never be forgiven."

"Go your way to church, friend, and leave us to our methods," said Cay. "Again I say, sell me a little of the magic water; or I shall take it by force and give you nothing."

"I believe you are little better than a cutpurse," said the countryman. "I suspect also you are mad. Cutpurse or madman, I will not fight you; and, if I am not to get away with the whole contents of my flagon, I will sell you a part. Show me your guinea."

Cay held one out.

"I shall at least have made the journey without cost," said the man more cheerily. "Half a mile along this lane we come to a flat stone, which your imagination—a strong one, I doubt not—may convert into a font—though that to my mind is also blasphemy. In the centre of this stone is a small depression, which commonly holds about a pint of rain-water. Now it will be dry. Here I shall pour out some of St. Ludgvan's water. Then I will take the guinea and depart. I pray you not to raise the devil till I am out of sight."

They rode along the lane, and came presently to the great stone which the countryman had mentioned. Having alighted from their horses, the water-carrier uncorked his flagon, then half filled the natural bowl. After that he snatched the guinea, spat upon it, and hurried away, vastly afraid of being struck by lightning.

For good or evil baptism was conferred by maid upon man beside that ancient stone which had perhaps been the centre of fierce pagan rites; and such was Ruth's zeal she did not cease to sprinkle her lover until the supply of holy water failed. There was no fanaticism

then ; all was simplicity of belief and natural faith ; which might have been foolish credulity, but was not blasphemy.

Ruth would have prayed for an hour, but Cay drew her towards the horse. They stood for a few moments to embrace again ; and then rode away among the lengthening shadows.

"I told you God would come if you repented, Harry. You did repent, and so God sent the man with St. Ludgvan's water. Now you are pure and sinless ; nor can you be hanged for any of your past misdeeds. You are now a Cornishman, my Harry."

"I could never speak their droning language, sweetheart."

"If a Cornishman should challenge you, repeat to him, one, two, three, four, five, in his own language. Thus, Harry : ouyn, dow, tray, peswar, pimp. That will satisfy him you are indeed a Cornishman."

Cay repeated the words after her several times ; then declared they were safe in his memory.

They came, as darkness was falling, to a wayside inn, where the landlady informed them she could accommodate two travellers for the night. A meal was served, and they fell to it heartily after the long day's fasting. During the course of it Ruth required her mother's necklet, and Cay handed it over, yet most unwillingly, and begging her to be careful not to show it.

"I am accustomed to place it beneath my pillow," she said.

After supper Cay rose, as he desired to go to the stable and tend to the horse himself. Ruth went with him to the yard-gate, and whispered as he was about to leave her, "Harry, be careful not to commit a sin."

Then she strolled along the peaceful country lane, filled with the half-darkness of a night in early summer ; and she mused upon many things, but not upon her

own faults of disobedience to Sir Thomas, and of wandering out into the world with her young lover ; for no ill-deed, she argued, could proceed from sacred love.

Spiritual excitement had worked a change in Ruth, of which she was well aware ; but it went deeper than she knew of. Her feet were led along the lane as if by some sense of duty. She was not called to walk there ; she simply went, and could not help it. Yet she was not astonished to hear the tread of horses ; for the same instinct which led her from the inn told her the two riders they had seen some hours before were close at hand. Nor was she surprised at beholding in the dim light the faces of Martin Just and Peter Clabar.

" Here is our runaway ! We could not have done this better," cried Martin.

" Are you come to take me back to Moyle ? I tell you plainly, sirs, I do not go," said Ruth.

" We come to help you on your journey. We are Samaritans, not Levites," replied Martin.

" Though in my opinion, Ruth, you are a fool," said Cherry.

" She does not ask for your opinion, Peter—neither do I," said Martin.

" Why did you not ride us down before ? " asked Ruth.

" This lad was afraid your gentleman might draw his pistols. For my part I did not care whether we found you or not. We took the lower road by chance, and soon discovering we were right came on."

" You would have turned back had I not promised to protect you ; and then Ruth would have gone without her clothing," said Cherry scornfully.

" I dared you to strike my horse," said Martin hotly.

" And I did so. Now you can hardly sit upright in the saddle. We have not ridden forty miles, and you are galled already."

"Gentlemen, your quarrels are nothing to me," said Ruth. "Will you tell me your business and let me go?"

"My lady desires me to tell you the fellow you now elope with is a great scoundrel who will drive you to lead a shameful life," began Martin sullenly.

"Please to tell my lady, sir, Harry Cay is a gentleman with whom my honour and my life are safe."

"Could we exchange places, Mistress Ruth—and sex," said Cherry, "you would call me fool, and I should make your answer."

"As you are of age," continued Martin, "you must be allowed to choose your way. My lady desired me to ride after you, and deliver you this parcel, which contains your clothing; also this letter, which you are to hand to the young gentleman whom you honour with your company. And now that we have discharged our duty we will leave you."

"I thank you both," cried Ruth warmly. "Tell my lady all will end well; commend me to her, sir; and I pray convey my thanks to her for all the kindness she has shown me. Master Peter, will you also do me a service?" she begged, holding up to Cherry her mother's necklet, which she had wrapped securely in her handkerchief. "Will you ask my lady to keep this for me, until I am in need of it? 'Tis a trifling thing that once belonged to my dear mother, and I fear it may be stolen from me."

"By your gentleman," said Martin.

"Nay, sir; by some villain of the road."

"Give it me! Why should Peter carry it?"

"Because she knows which of the two may best be trusted," said Cherry.

"By heaven, I'll have it!"

"Keep off, little man, or I may do you some injury. Take your parcel, Mistress Ruth—and farewell. I will bear this trinket to my lady as safely as I shall convey this young gentleman to Bezurrel Castle. Come, Martin! Let us be going to find shelter."

Ruth left them wrangling, and returned to the inn, staggering beneath her parcel. There she discovered Harry half distracted and accusing the honest landlady of having made away with her. She told of her adventure ; but kept back part.

" I knew I had seen one of those horsemen before," said Cay. " My Lady Just must have few friends among great ladies ; for she seems to care for the poor and fatherless."

" She is good indeed," Ruth answered. " But Sir Thomas is a man of iron. Harry, I have returned to her my mother's necklet."

The young man started up, white-faced and gasping. " Sent to her the necklet ! Given her the diamonds ! Then, Ruth, we are ruined."

" No more so than we were this morning ; when you did not know of the diamonds, and I believed them worthless. I have not given them to my lady—nor indeed would she accept of them—but have asked her to take charge of them. Were you not somewhat too eager to embrace Ruth, when you thought her a great fortune ? Do you shrink from Ruth, now that she is poor ? "

" No, by my soul," cried the young convert loudly. " Ruth is Ruth with fortune or without. I am true to the maid who saved my life, and now will save my soul. You have done well, my little angel. Had we kept the diamonds—I had not thought of this before—I could not have sold them. The first jeweller to whom I offered them would have placed me in the charge of constables for a thief. We have fourteen of Grambla's guineas—part of his debt to you. We have health and youth. And we have love."

" We have God too, Harry," she cried excitedly. " Now I know my lady's letter of entreaty to you is but an insult to a gentleman. I staked my life upon your loyalty—and have won ! "

CHAPTER VI

TWO YOUNG PEOPLE FALL OUT UPON THE WAY

THERE being no decent inn within a score of miles, Cherry and Martin were forced to pull up at the first ale-house to which they came after bidding farewell to Ruth. Their cry for ostler brought forth the landlord himself, who assured them his house was the best in the neighbourhood, and far better than many so-called inns ; while his good lady followed, being drawn to the door by the sound of genteel voices, to assure the gentlemen they were most welcome, but unfortunately she had only three bedrooms, and of these two were already accommodating a bagman and a curate.

"However," said she, "the third room is at your service, gentlemen ; and I doubt not you will be able to shift for this night together."

"How far away is the next house ? " asked Cherry.

"Five miles, sir ; but 'tis a beggarly house, and most uncleanly."

"You may stop here if you choose, Martin. I go on," she said.

"You fool, Peter ! If I can put up with this place, why cannot you ? " he whispered. Then he said to the landlady, "Show us the chamber, my good woman."

"I am told, sir, there are some drunken sailors at the next house," called the landlord, who had already pulled the saddles from the horses. "I doubt if you would find accommodation, but 'tis very likely you would leave in the morning with an empty purse."

"The young gentleman was jesting," said the

woman pleasantly. "He would not leap from the pan into the fire, as the saying is."

Cherry said nothing more ; nor could she, with the host and hostess listening, and the bagman leaning from the window of the kitchen. She went with Martin into the poor place, and they followed the landlady up a crooked flight of stairs, into an ill-smelling room. The floor-space beneath a sloping roof was almost filled by a curtained bed, which was the sole article of furniture. Here the landlady, at Cherry's request, placed the candlestick upon the boards and left them, after receiving Martin's order for the best supper she could provide.

"You have quarrelled with me the whole of this day," he began immediately the door was closed. "I have never known you in such an ill-humour, and that is saying much. I suppose you are in love with this white-faced Ruth and vexed at losing her."

"One person cannot make a quarrel," replied Cherry.

"He can quarrel with himself ; and that is what you have done."

"Then what business had you to answer ?"

"You angered me with your vile temper. At the first we were friends, and studied together. We seemed to have many ideas in common, though you are a Clabar, and I am a Just."

"My family is older than yours. Clabars were tilling Cornish soil when the Justs were unknown."

"You preach upon living !" Martin continued. "You told me you had discovered how to be happy every day, even in poverty and sickness. By dwelling in a woodland, you said, by tending the flowers, and watching the birds ; by not quarrelling with any living creature ; by accepting fortune as it comes and making the best of it ; and by cultivating the spirit of happiness—by doing all this, you declared, we should live long and make a profitable use of our talents. Why do you not practise what you preach ?"

"I am perfectly happy," replied Cherry. "Even though I stand in this ill-smelling room of a wayside beer-house, in the company of a most sullen young gentleman."

"Is it not true what I say? Your every word is a challenge to fight. The first time I walked with you in Bezurrel Woods, I agreed you had discovered a perfect way of living, and I told you I would gladly spend my life according to your teaching. Then you must turn upon me with a frown, and call me idle."

"You would have sat beneath a tree all day, with a book upon your knees. You would have done nothing to aid your fellow-creatures."

"Pray what have you done?"

"I fight with them, and try to arouse their sluggish minds. I have at least succeeded in arousing you."

"You bring out all that is evil in me."

"That is my desire. When it is out, do not suffer it to return. So you intend to pass the night in this foul place. I advise you to break the window if it will not open."

"Do you refuse to remain here with me?"

"It is a whim of mine to sleep in a good atmosphere."

"I tell you what it is, Peter," said Martin hotly. "You consider yourself too fine a gentleman to lie with the son of a baronet. You might consent to share a room with David, for he is the eldest son and heir. But I—I am not good enough. You regard me as offensive. You would be poisoned if you shared a room with me."

"I am sorry you think so ill of yourself," said Cherry. "I do not choose to pass the night in this chamber—and that's the end of it."

"You would lie here if I were out of it."

"From necessity I might."

"I have heard too many of your insults," said Martin fiercely. "I do not know why I have been friendly with you—the son of a poor man, a mere scribbling clerk, who now lives upon the bounty of my father."

"You lie, Martin! My father has a little money saved by industry, which is a virtue you are never likely to make acquaintance with."

"When that is gone, you and he will starve. And for my part I shall not be sorry. Were my father to die, which God forbid, David would turn you out of Bezurrel Woods."

"Why should he act so spitefully?"

"Because you insult him, as you do me. We, the sons of Sir Thomas Just, make ourselves the friends of a ruined yeoman's son!"

"Who does not need your friendship?"

"Go out! Lie under the hedge for all I care," cried Martin, making an angry movement and treading upon the candlestick.

Cherry descended the stairs, with a girlish smile upon her pretty boyish face, which was hardened suitably as she approached the landlady, who had been listening attentively to the high voices overhead, and inquired whether she could be given accommodation in the stable. It so happened that the ragged curate was seated in a corner of the kitchen; and he rose at once with a bow, to inform the young gentleman he was sorry to hear his companion was a violent fellow, and as he himself was very little accustomed to occupy a room alone, the young gentleman would honour him by sharing it. Cherry thanked him with all her heart, but could not accept his kindness. Then, being informed by the landlady she might do worse than sleep in the loft, which was indeed far better than any accommodation she would be likely to obtain at the next ale-house, she went out into the yard and discovered the landlord, who provided her with a truss of hay by means of which she made herself a bed, murmuring the while, "Poor Martin! I believe he will not speak with me again."

At the next meeting there was no opportunity for bitterness, as they supped in the kitchen—this poor

house having no other room—amid smoke and fumes. Meanwhile curate and bagman discussed from their respective corners upon the religious revival, then beginning to make turmoil in the villages ; the curate affirming that it was nothing less than a fresh establishment of Satan's kingdom upon earth ; while the bagman, although a stout man for the church, argued against the curate, and talked for victory. Host and hostess had nothing to say, except that any form of religious revival, which discouraged the consumption of good liquor, was assuredly the work of evil spirits. But when Cherry and Martin had left the kitchen, all were agreed that two handsomer young gentlemen had never set foot upon Cornish soil ; although the stronger of the two, according to the bagman, who had more worldly wisdom than the rest, had little right to be a gentleman, since any lady in the land might well be jealous of his features.

Cherry made for the stable, but Martin followed at a sulky distance, and called, " Stay a moment, Peter ! " when his companion was about to disappear.

" I am sorry, Martin, if I offended you by seeming to prefer the hayloft to a chamber in your company," she said.

" There must be some good reason," he replied.

" Do not suppose I dislike you, Martin."

" You are the strangest fellow in this world. Let us walk along the road, Peter—the people of the house strain their ears to catch what we are saying."

" I will not go far, as I am tired," said Cherry, going with him from the yard.

" Then I am the stronger of the two ! You may beat me riding, for you are the lighter—though that is a thing I cannot understand—but I can walk you down."

" You cannot talk me down. I consider you a vain young dog."

" By heavens ! " cried Martin. " Cannot you open your mouth without abusing me ? "

"Very easily, if you show me the way."

"I declare there is no fellow like you in the world. Will you tell me why my father likes you so well?"

"Why question me when Sir Thomas is not dumb? He likes me because I am a papist."

"Why does he like your father, who is a heretic?"

"For my sake."

"Why does David like you?"

"Because my sporting spirit matches his."

"You have no sporting spirit. You—a strong fellow—shrink from a coney in a gin; you are frightened at the sight of blood. Answer this question, Peter—what makes me friendly to you?"

"Because two quarrelsome spirits strike a spark of sympathy," she declared.

"You are the greatest mystery on earth—I quote my father's words. Who taught you, Peter? David and I have been educated as gentlemen; you have never even been to school. Yet we cannot talk like you. And I believe you have as much literature as either of us."

"My professors were men who had grown learned by travel. My books were once the faces of my fellow-creatures. So you like me, Martin?"

"Some days I hate you; and other days I have it in my heart to love you."

"Even as Damon loved Pythias?" she asked carelessly.

"How did you hear of Damon and Pythias?"

"From a book your father lent me."

"I know nothing of their friendship," said Martin sullenly. "I feel sometimes as if my affection for you was not a natural one. Do not take this amiss," he went on hurriedly.

"Explain," she said.

"Nay, I dare not. When you look at me—and smile as though you forgot yourself—and the corners of your mouth quiver, I could almost forget you are a man."

" And then, Damon, you regard me as Pythias ! "

" The same hour I am cursing you for your bitter tongue. Why is it that both David and myself have this feeling for you ? "

" I spare David, because his wit is not so keen as yours—though he will make the best man of the two. I believe, Martin, we could agree together."

" Why should my brother and I desire to agree with you ? " he continued restlessly. " We are high-born gentlemen, while you—be not offended, Peter—you are the son of a poor man. At least so it is supposed."

" What do you mean ? " asked Cherry in her gruffest voice.

" Let me have my say. It is not usual for the sons of a baronet to go down into the cottages to find a friend. They go after wenches, it is true. But I do not."

" And I like you the better for it," added Cherry.

" We came to see you out of curiosity. We came again, and could not stay away ; for you threw a spell over David by your strength, while you fascinated me with your learning. We have even quarrelled over you, when each of us required your company the same day."

" A pretty story ! Two young gentlemen fighting over the right to walk and talk with a fellow, their inferior ! "

" You do not go after wenches. You do not turn your head if a chambermaid of Bezurrel waves her hand to you. Can you explain your nature to me, Peter ? "

" I believe I could do so, Martin ; but allow me for the present to remain a mystery. To your father my nature is as clear as daylight."

" That is not so. You are as great a mystery to him as to David and myself."

" How can that be ? "

" He has often declared you are not the son of Clabar."

" Sir Thomas would never have used such words."

" He has uttered them in my presence."

" What more did he say ? "

"He spoke Italian to my mother; and I do not understand that language. But I heard the name of Grambla several times."

"You mistook his meaning. Mother Gothel had the care of me as an infant from my birth, and she knows very well my father is John Clabar. And I shall fight any man who declares the contrary."

"You must fight with my father then."

"Any man except him," said Cherry uneasily; for she remembered the books of witchcraft. "Say nothing more on this subject, or I shall be vexed with you," she went on. "I am retiring now. I shall remember, Martin, that you love me."

"I trust you will strive to make yourself more worthy of a gentleman's affection," said the young man loftily. "Let us have no more folly about this chamber. 'Tis a poor place, I know; yet you need not despise what I am able to accept."

"I go to my hayloft," said Cherry with the utmost firmness.

"If you do so—after this friendly conversation—I swear I shall never forgive you."

"My desire to sleep among the hay is part of the mystery of my nature."

"Call me offensive, and make an end of it," cried Martin.

"I wish you good night, Martin. Now I believe you hate me."

"I will have no more words with you. Nor shall I ever walk again with you—bastard!"

"Ah!" cried Cherry, as she turned to face Martin, whose face was whiter than her own. One moment they stared at each other in the half-darkness; the next Cherry advanced, as if to strike a blow. Then she ran, with a semblance of terror, towards the yard and the hayloft. Courage had not failed, but sex asserted itself; so that it was necessary for her to be alone and weep.

CHAPTER VII

CERTAIN CURIOUS DISCOVERIES ARE MADE

CHERRY was out of the hay by break of day, and upon the road soon after sunrise. Martin rose some hours later and, when informed by the landlady that his comrade had departed, merely replied, "I am glad to be rid of the peevish fellow." Then he paid the reckoning, mounted his horse, and set off for Bezurrel; arriving there about midday.

Sir Thomas and David were walking in the park, and Martin went towards them, after giving his horse into the charge of a groom. His father looked somewhat excited; yet his voice was angry when he spoke:

"So you and Peter have fallen out again."

"I see the fellow has been here," muttered the younger son.

"He went an hour ago."

"Did he tell you all that passed between us, sir?"

"Young Clabar has no secrets from me; not one, thank God! Why did you insult him, Martin?"

"I believe, sir, he told you the reason."

"Nothing could excuse the word you threw at him. I am exceedingly vexed with you, Martin. You I regarded as a young gentleman clean in tongue; yet, had you been brought up in the kennels, you could not have uttered a taunt more ill-bred. Peter is as dear to me as my two sons; nay, even dearer."

"You will permit me, sir, to express surprise at what you say," said David, reddening.

"Have you more to say, David?"

"Why, sir, a great change has come over your manner since Peter's visit."

"Say all that is in your mind."

"You go to my mother, sir, and when you both come out, I can see you are agitated, while my mother has been weeping."

"Not all tears of sorrow, David."

"I am glad of that, sir."

"I trust, sir, I was not the cause," said Martin.

"I spoke hastily just now," said Sir Thomas. "It used to be my boast that I could control my tongue and restrain emotion; but I must hold to that no longer. Great news, whether of joy or sorrow, will change a man despite himself. I forgive you, Martin—have I not myself been made to smart by Peter's nimble wit? But I charge you both not to offend him."

"Neither Martin nor I, sir, can understand why you treat this young fellow as our equal," ventured the elder son.

"You have made him your friend, David."

"I have a liking for him. We feel ourselves drawn towards him."

"Nature may explain much to you hereafter," said Sir Thomas in his brooding manner. "The name of Clabar contains the record of an old and honoured family."

"Of yeomen, sir."

"Ay, of yeomen. How would this kingdom stand without its yeomen? Remember, my sons! If either offends young Peter, he must face my anger."

Sir Thomas went away into the house and entered his wife's boudoir. Lady Just was seated at her escritoire, scanning a number of old diaries.

"Have you made any fresh discovery, Manuela?" he asked.

"Here is a note of all the dates. They coincide exactly," she answered.

"The hand of God is here," said Sir Thomas reverently. "I deserve to be punished for my ill thoughts of Ruth—poor girl. We papists are apt to believe that heaven may only be reached along our narrow way. Ruth is the instrument which God has used to make this story clear."

"Shall you not end it now? Do so, I beg of you," said my lady earnestly. "You do not fear that meagre Grambla?" she added.

"I am assured of his hatred for me. He is convinced I have practised enchantments upon him—and I shall do so again. At the present I shall not place a weapon in his hand; for though I do not fear his tongue, nor any of his claims, I fear his deeds. Yet I perceive his faculties decay. His mind becomes clouded by luxury; but his nature remains the same. If he could know what we have this day discovered, he would be aroused from his stupor—with a desire to inflict vengeance upon me—and set his dark wits to work. Then Cherry might disappear, or be found lying dead in the woods. I do not open my mouth until Grambla is ruined. I desire also to watch the conduct of our sons. As for Ruth, we know she will enable us to find her, now that we hold her fortune in our hands. The girl has done well indeed!"

In the meantime David and Martin were talking in the park.

"Brother," said David, "I shall soon believe these folks of Moyle who declare our father practises the black arts."

"That I could never believe," replied Martin. "A wizard would find it more profitable to write upon his art than to practise it; and, as there is no literature upon witchcraft, I conceive the thing itself does not exist."

"Why, you fool, all the world believes in witchcraft."

"Only the world of fools accepts it; and as I do not

I cannot be a fool. Mother Gothel will swear she can bewitch men and women ; but ask her to mutter the spell to you, and she is done."

" I am certain my father knows the future. He could tell us—if he would—the whole fortune of young Peter."

" What has happened this morning ? " asked Martin.

" Peter rode up, saw me in the distance, and waved his hand ; went to our father, and presently they both proceed to our mother's boudoir. I watched them from the gallery, and father was holding Peter's arm, smiling over him like a lover—I could have beat the fellow."

" Ruth gave him some trifle to carry to our mother."

" I believe we shall find that Ruth and Peter are somehow related."

" He was vexed to part with Ruth."

" He has made love to her, I warrant. She was a cunning wench. She feigned religion so that she might walk in the woods with Peter."

" If he loved the maid, why did he not challenge the rascal who ran with her ? "

" He is a coward," said David.

" Peter a coward ! " cried Martin.

" And bully too. Show him fight and he flutters like a maid."

" Like a maid," repeated Martin.

" He is full of unmanly ways in spite of his strength. This morning, when he passed with my father, he held his head to one side and blushed. When he waved his hand to me, 'twas what I might have called a feminine motion."

" A feminine motion," Martin murmured.

" I cannot find a better word. What ails you, brother ? "

" That is the word," said Martin hoarsely. " Brother, all the night I was trying to find the word which could explain Peter's conduct ; and now you have put it in

my mouth. We could not be accommodated with more than one room, and he refused to share it with me. It made me mad to think my presence was offensive to a low-born fellow ; so, in a fit of temper I insulted him. Why did I not think of that word feminine ? ”

“ It explains nothing,” said David.

“ Brother, is Peter a man ? ”

“ I think you are dreaming—I know you talk like a fool. To be sure he is a man ; but I allow the rogue has some plaguy wench-like ways.”

“ Have you seen his arm ? ”

“ Ay, many a time.”

“ Have you seen his bare arm ? Above the wrist his skin is white as milk.”

“ The fellow is a coxcomb ; he uses cosmetics. You can make him blush—again like a maid—if you tell him a story of the town.”

“ Ay, like a maid,” repeated Martin. “ Have you seen him wince at the prick of a bramble ? ”

“ He tore his hand once when I was with him. I saw his blood.”

“ How did you act, brother ? ”

“ What is that to you ? ”

“ Nay, tell me.”

“ Hang me for an idiot, but I asked him leave to bind the wound,” said David savagely.

“ Did he consent ? ”

“ He laughed at me.”

“ Ay, I know his way. If another man laughed at you in the same fashion, you would have beaten him.”

“ I would not have called him a bastard. Had I been with you last night, I should have made you sorry for your temper.”

“ You feel a great interest in Peter ? ”

“ By heaven, I like the fellow. And the more he taunts me, the better I like him—yet I know he is a coward.”

" You like him because he is handsome. When he looks at you with his big grey eyes, and smiles even while he mocks you, I believe you are saying to yourself, ' I love the fellow.' When did the word feminine first occur to you, brother ? "

" I found it upon my tongue and spoke it. But, look you, Martin, this is the greatest nonsense. It is true Peter can look like a maid, and act like one—'tis a trick only, and he would do well to get rid of it. We have seen young men at Oxford as handsome."

" Not with his eyes and such fine hair."

" Are you bewitched by a man's grey eyes ? " scoffed David.

" Were you bewitched by Peter's bleeding hand ? "

" 'Twas his plaguy mouth that did it. I tell you, Martin, it is not possible that Peter should be a maid, for he is stronger than many a man about here. I believe he could beat you ; and, if he showed courage, I should have to do my best to beat him."

" My father knows everything. I have a mind to ask him," said Martin.

" You will get no answer unless he is in the mood to give it."

" Come with me to Poldrifty, and let us question the old witch. She is in the company of my father every week, and knows all his secrets. Besides, she nursed Peter as an infant."

" I am with you, brother ; but Mother Gothel has no cause to love us, for we played many a prank upon her in our younger days."

" We will buy her secrets. She is nothing more than a foolish old woman who will blab to any one. But look you, David, if Peter is a maid, I go this evening to Bezurrel Woods," said Martin warmly.

" To get your head broke. Why, you fool, do you suppose the heir to the house of Just would kneel before a yeoman's daughter ? " replied David, with such heat that the younger brother was startled from his

dreams. He closed his lips, and they walked in silence to the house.

Mother Gothall lived in the same hovel, continuing to serve all who had need of her. Jacob had not entirely forgotten his promises, so the dame had now a silk gown to wear on Sundays, and a purse of money hidden away among the stones. One day Jacob came for advice ; the next she would carry his latest confession to Bezurrel. She owned two masters, serving each with complete success, and accepting gifts from both ; but she remained true to the house of Clabar and did not lie to Sir Thomas Just.

When the brothers arrived outside the open door—which appeared to communicate with the nether regions, as smoke poured forth continually—they hesitated, hearing the muttering of voices. They called to the witch, but she did not answer ; and the figure which appeared upon the threshold was that of their father, who looked somewhat amused to discover his sons outside that hovel.

“ So you have followed me,” he said.

“ No, sir,” replied Martin. “ We did not know you were here.”

“ Mother Gothall ! ” called Sir Thomas. “ My sons are arrived, as I warned you, to hear their fortunes. I leave them to you.” Then he walked out, saying to David, who stood nearest, “ Find me presently at the foot of the downs, beside the road to Moyle. We will walk together.”

He went down the track, and immediately Mother Gothall appeared, to welcome the visitors in her usual fulsome manner, and to assure them they were the finest young gentlemen in the world with one exception only. “ And he be the young gentleman you ha’ come to me about,” said she.

“ Who told you so ? ” asked David, who was not at his ease before this woman with a beard.

“ I knows everything,” replied the witch. “ I was

sitting under the stars last night, watching the sparks blowing from the fire, and I says to myself, 'the young gentlemen of Bezurrel ain't been to me yet, but they'll come to-morrow.' Now, young gentlemen, you pitch upon they two stones, and I'll tell ye what be agoing to happen."

"We have not come to hear our fortunes," said Martin.

"So you says, but if you thinks a bit, and looks into your heart, you'll find I be right as ever. Young folk always craves to know the future. You are both to go upon a long journey," cried Mother Gothel. "You will cross the sea, and you will come safe home again. But before you make the journey there will be trouble between ye."

"You talk like any gipsy. We can hear this stuff for a shilling on the road," said Martin.

"Young gentlemen, if you bain't careful, you will bring trouble on your family. I see a picture in the air—what you can't see—and 'tis the sign of hatred and quarrels, ay, and of sudden death."

"That will do, mother," said David. "Neither my brother nor myself have any desire to play the highwayman. Come out of your raving, and listen to our questions. Here is a guinea for you."

"I thank ye, sir," said the practical Mother Gothel. "You wants to ask me questions about the storm."

"What storm?" asked Martin.

"The great storm, years ago. There be black and tearing tempests every fall, but there never was such a storm as that, and there never will be such another while the world lasts."

"Mother, we have come to ask you a few simple questions," said Martin. "Is Peter the son of John Clabar? And—answer this question first—is Peter all that he pretends to be?"

"It puts a witch body about to hear a young gentleman from Oxford ask questions," said the

ingenious Mother Gothel. "I brought Master Peter into this artful world; and if it warn't for me he would never be living now. Aw, I was a fine woman in them days."

"You are not answering the questions. Is Peter a man like my brother and myself?"

"No, my young Oxford learned gentlemen, saving your presence, he bain't. There never was such a young gentleman as Master Peter, and there never will be such another while the world lasts."

"Will you swear there is nothing feminine in his nature?" asked Martin, who shrank from putting the question more directly.

"They says the sun be him," said Mother Gothel darkly, "yet he be as fickle wi' his favours as a woman. And they says the moon be her; but there be nought in the moon save a peevish old gentleman and his nasty little dog. I be a she for certain, yet I grows a beard."

"Cannot you answer with yes or no?" cried David.

"Witches be inspired, and they must answer wi' the words they find in their mouths. 'Tis only plain folk, who bain't inspired, what answers wi' yes and no."

"Then tell us of the storm in as few inspired words as possible," said Martin.

Thereupon Mother Gothel went off into history; coming at last to the vital incidents:

"And as the storm began, little Peter was born in my cottage, which be all ruin now. And as the storm died down, another wreck was cast upon the shore, but nobody knew the name of that ship, for 'twas the worst of all the wrecks; and there was nigh upon a dozen while that storm lasted. The only folk that come alive to shore was little baby Ruth and her poor mother. Some says the mother was drowned afore cast up; some says she lived to speak to Master Grambla. He took baby Ruth—and he was cruel to her."

"What happened to baby Peter?" asked Martin.

"He was carried out of Moyle and sent off in the public coach to Dock, and was brought up there by friends of Mistress Clabar. Us were afraid old Grambla would do some mischief to the child."

"Why should he hate the Clabars?"

"He got Coinagehall from them by fraud. He was always afraid of the Clabars trying to take the place away from him. He turns Squire Clabar out of house and work when he hears Peter was coming back here. They be the last of the Clabars, and Grambla would get rid of 'em if he could; but he arn't got the courage to attack Master Clabar now that your father ha' took him under his protection; and he don't dare to tackle Master Peter. Grambla be in mortal terror of strong men and witchcraft. Yet he would ha' got rid of them in some way if he hadn't got this fortune which ha' made a fine gentleman of him; though how he come into all this money nobody knows but me, and I ain't allowed to tell."

The brothers left Mother Gothel with their guinea's worth of useless information; and went to join Sir Thomas, who rose from a rock when his sons drew near; then they walked towards the sea with small talk. The baronet had not a word to say concerning the visit to Mother Gothel; though it was in his mind, for he glanced sometimes at his sons with searching eyes; but he did not speak seriously until they had descended the cliff by a steep pathway, and were overlooking a spit of sand covered with fang-shaped rocks. Then he turned towards his sons and said, "Mother Gothel told you of the storm?"

"Yes, sir," replied Martin.

"Her mind deals with a few facts only. She has knowledge in deception, not in truth," Sir Thomas continued.

"That is a warning, brother," whispered David. "The old baggage lied to us."

"Out to sea yonder, where the patches of foam

appear, are those rocks which completed the destruction of the vessel. Do you attend to me, David ? ”

“ I am looking and listening, sir.”

“ Change places with Martin ; for what I am saying chiefly concerns my heir.”

David obeyed with a glance at Martin, who looked sullen ; and Sir Thomas continued :

“ By this pathway Grambla, the chief wrecker, descended, still waving, I doubt not, his cursed lantern. By it he returned, carrying the child. Note well what I am saying, David. Upon that sand the poor lady was thrown, missing the rocks, but not the fierce hands of the robber—perchance her murderer. Look upon that picture with the full force of your imagination. I charge you, David, never to forget this peaceful cove ; and should it please God to take me before my work is finished, continue it and do not cease until the scoundrel Grambla is ruined.”

“ Will you not tell us, sir, all that lies behind this tragedy ? ” asked Martin.

“ Not yet. You are boys, and can wait. Some day you will understand my present silence. Now let us return.”

They climbed to the summit of the cliff, and Sir Thomas led them along the winding road, to the corner where Ruth had met her lover, and along by the copse, and beside the boundary of Coinagehall ; until the sons wondered where he could be taking them. At last they reached the entrance of the churchyard and, passing under the tottering lich-gate, paused beside a sad heap where a cankered rose-bush stood.

“ This must be the grave mentioned by Mother Gothel,” said Sir Thomas, removing his hat and crossing himself ; then adding, “ I know not if it be a sin to make the sign of our redemption in a place where Christianity is dead.”

“ I believe, sir, Ruth would come to this grave,” said David.

"Mother Gothall planted the rose-tree in memory—so she told me—of the lovely lady. Mark this grave well, David ; though it will not be a place of pilgrimage for you in years to come. I shall presently obtain permission to remove the body, and give it a more honoured resting-place."

"You knew the lady, sir ? "

"I loved her, David."

"Will you not tell us her name, sir ? " asked the impatient Martin.

"This evening, and to-morrow morning, you shall hear her name mentioned—Elizabeth Mary. Her husband's name was Geoffrey."

"Shall you not strive, sir, to discover Ruth ? " asked Martin.

"I shall strive my utmost to secure her happiness," replied Sir Thomas.

They left the churchyard and proceeded to Bezurrel Castle by a private lane. A catafalque was set up in the chapel, which was being prepared for Vespers of the Dead, and solemn Requiem next morning, for the repose of the souls of Elizabeth Mary, and her husband Geoffrey.

CHAPTER VIII

TWO YOUNG PEOPLE TRY TO SETTLE THEIR DIFFERENCES IN THE USUAL MANNER

ASTONISHED by the manner of the Justs, although ignorant that Ruth had recalled the agitation of the storm, Cherry returned to the cottage in the wood ; there to find her father engaged upon the monumental work of copying the plays of Shakespeare. For Clabar was still a clerk, but now he worked for his daughter, giving her a library of manuscripts which he copied from the folios of Bezurrel.

"Wipe your pen," said Cherry, when she had told of her adventures. "This is a holiday, and we will spend it on a bank of periwinkle."

"I have finished the tragedies," said Clabar, "with the exception of 'Titus Andronicus,' which you desired me to omit."

"Too cruel," she said. "'Tis drama without God."

"No cruelty is impossible to man."

"Heaven always intervenes. You shall spend summer at the comedies, father ; and they will wipe the wrinkles off your forehead. Pray copy 'Love's Labour's Lost' the first of all ; for that is a story of Bezurrel Woods. I see the laughing king and his fantastic courtiers walking in our atmosphere in love with words. 'Tis a story false to life, yet true to human nature."

"I have this morning commenced the 'Tempest.'"

"That is another of our stories. You are right, father. We will have the 'Tempest' first."

Presently they went out and sat upon a shady bank

starred with the flowers of happy memory, for periwinkles in those woods were white ; but had not been there long when they heard sounds among the trees, as if sorrow had forced a pathway there. The lumbering shape of Toby Penrice appeared ; carrying in his left hand a great horseshoe ; his right arm embracing the waist of a young woman whose solemn face was freckled from brow to chin ; and the noise was made by his most unmanly sobbing.

"Owl of ill-omen in the sunshine !" exclaimed Cherry. "So Toby has found a partner. I told you, if he was to win a wench, she would be Creature Tregoose." (There was nothing to smile at in the Christian name, which was then by no means uncommon.) "Toby !" she cried. "For a strong fellow to weep is folly anywhere ; but in these woods of Bezurrel 'tis a sin."

"My fortune, gentlemen ! My golden fortune !" bemoaned Toby.

"I know something of that," said Clabar. "Grambla had the handling of your fortune ; and now has sunk it in furnishings and liveries."

"In the salt sea, master. He floats my guineas upon the salt south sea, and they go to the bottom."

"After the manner of metal," said Cherry.

"I waited upon him at his office," Toby blubbered. "He would not see me. I go to Coinagehall, and the servants force me from the door. This morning I caught him in the garden. I told him the time was past when I should receive a sum ; and he took snuff, gentlemen. He took snuff, and raised his eyes to heaven ; and he sighed, gentlemen ; and I knew all was not well."

"That silent manner is the hardest thing about him," Clabar muttered.

"Told me he was a broken-hearted gentleman," sobbed Toby. "Stood on the edge of a precipice, which was a lie, gentlemen, for he stood upon green grasses, between two clipped shrubs ; one a prickly

Adam in holly, t'other a naughty Eve in box ; yonder was the devil in yew."

"Before you, Toby. The devil is a gentleman in lace," cried Cherry.

"Desired me to gaze upon the garden and the servants ; to go into the house, if I would, and regard the rich furnishings," continued the weeper. "Swore nought was paid for. Said we had stood together, and now would fall together. Sink, gentlemen—sink was his word."

"You have no wit, Toby. He described himself as a drain for carrying off ill-gotten guineas," said Cherry.

"Nay, young gentleman, I have a pretty good wit. Have I not, Creature ? I understand a man who tells me I am ruined. I have enough wit to know when my pockets are empty."

"You trusted Grambla ; and now he has robbed you," said Clabar shortly.

"Called me a dog. Called me a lazy dog. Said if he saw me in the fields, or caught me trapping a hare, he'd have the law on me. What be I to do now, gentlemen ? I ha' courted Creature five years, on and off ; and if 'twas more off than on, that was her doing. For she could never be true to her word, gentlemen."

"I ha' said no a hundred times, and I ha' kept to it," declared the damsel.

"You ha' said yes fifty times within my living memory, and never kept to it. First time I ask you, I get the answer yea ; and it was spoke significant ; but I had hardly got home when your sister comes to say 'twas nay you meant. So I asked her, and the baggage slapped my face. I ha' suffered all my life, gentlemen, from a slapped face. You answer me yea in spring and autumn ; in April and September, Creature, for I ha' took note of it. You answer me nay in summer and winter. And yesterday you answer yea and swear you mean it."

"'Tis nay to-day," maintained the damsel.

"Gentlemen," cried Toby, "I would have you witness that Grambla ha' not only lost my fortune, and called me a lazy dog, but now he takes my wench as well."

"I need no ruined man," said Creature, stepping back from the disappointed lover.

"Get a boat and turn fisherman," advised Clabar. "You are a strong fellow, and you have abused your strength too long. Grambla speaks truly when he says you have been idle. You are too great an admirer of good ale."

"That is not laziness," said Toby.

"You show a particular attachment to one shirt."

"I am no gentleman of quality," replied Toby. "But hearken to me, and I will tell you something; for, if it be true Grambla and myself be ruined, I would have him sink faster than myself. He offered me ten guineas if I would enter the woods one dark night and burn your cottage."

"When was this offer made?" asked Clabar.

"Many months ago; but I had money then and had no need to listen. So he offered me the like sum, Master Peter, if I would fight with you and do you some mortal injury."

"Why did you not fight me?" cried Cherry.

"I looked at you, and did not like the task."

"What say you, Creature? Could I whip Master Toby?" laughed Cherry.

"You could break every bone in his body, I warrant," replied the damsel, enjoying her questioner's face with amorous eyes.

"What are you doing with the horseshoe?" inquired Clabar.

"I carry it for luck, master; God knows I need it."

"So he makes a horseshoe his god; and carries it with the ends pointing downward so that his luck may run out," remarked Cherry.

"I found it upon the road outside this wood,"

continued Toby. "There is great virtue in a cast horse-shoe, gentlemen. I got my fortune by a horseshoe ; and now, upon the day I lose it, I find another shoe, which I shall carry home. I propose to win you with this horseshoe, Creature."

"Then you must turn it into gold," she snapped.

"How came you to win your fortune by a horse-shoe ?" asked Clabar.

"Why, sir, indirectly as the saying is. The fortune which I got from my father he obtained from his aunt. My father, you must know, was also a great believer in the virtue of cast horseshoes ; and finding one upon the road he carried it to his aunt whom he was anxious to please. My father desired to fasten the horseshoe over the porch with his own hands, but this the old lady would not permit. For she was a superstitious body, and believed no good fortune could proceed from the horseshoe unless she secured it above the door herself. She did so, and informed my father she was so well pleased with him that she had a mind to make her will in his favour ; and, to make my story as short as possible, gentlemen, she afterwards informed him she had done so ; adding that the horseshoe had undoubtedly brought her good luck, and he might regard himself as fortunate for having carried it to her."

"A pretty story," remarked Cherry.

"You have heard only the half of it," said Toby. "It so happened that the old lady lost her kindness for my father, who was a somewhat wild lad, and a sad dog for wenches ; in which fault, gentlemen, I am happy to think I take not after him. Several times she warned him that, if he did not amend his ways, she would destroy her will and leave her fortune to the curate. But the old Adam in my father did not change. One day he ill-used a wench who was not kind to him ; and this news, being carried to the old lady, put her into such a state of indignation that she sent her maid at once for the attorney, declaring that she could not

sleep until she had deprived my father of his fortune. Indeed, the old body could not stay in her room, but must go and stand beneath the porch to look out for the attorney. And while standing there, gentlemen, a gust of wind passed, and the big horseshoe, which her old fingers had not fastened up securely, became dislodged and fell upon her head with such violence that she was stunned by it. To be brief, gentlemen, the shock was so serious that she did not recover consciousness, but died upon the day following, leaving her will unaltered. And that is how the horseshoe brought my fortune. I believe this shoe, I have just picked up, is very likely to bring me another."

"Your hands will serve you better than a piece of iron—which may fall upon you, as it did upon your ancestress," said Cherry.

"So I would tell him," declared Creature. "He may cover the walls of his house with horseshoes, but I'll not live with an idler and toil for him."

"This horseshoe brings me good luck already," said Toby with a chuckle. "It has put me in mind of an old waistcoat I have at home. I believe there are more than thirty guineas concealed in the lining. I shall take your advice, Master Clabar; I shall get me a boat and go fishing; sometimes I shall net a pheasant and trap a hare. Come, my pretty Creature! Let us go and discover these thirty guineas. Say yes, and stay by it—we will live warmly, I promise you. I have plenty of wit to make a living. I am not without vices, but I have no ambition. Conversation I dislike; knowledge I despise; dress I set at nought—yet I admire women. If I have a weakness, Creature, it is love for thee. If I have a failing, it is that passion. Say yea, and mean it; then I weep no more."

The couple passed on through the wood; while Clabar and Cherry fell to talking of the attorney, who had left them unmolested so long.

"I perceive he is indolent through this fortune, which

came to him no man knows how," said Clabar. " But the time is coming when he will again attack us. See you, Cherry, how he has squandered the foolish Toby's fortune ; and that he would not do unless he were pushed. He reaches the end of his fortune ; he has neglected business that he might make himself a gentleman. Now his resources are near exhausted he will bite and wound."

" Sir Thomas has promised me to muzzle him ; and when that is done I may put off this disguise," said Cherry.

" I do not believe Sir Thomas can either muzzle him or protect us," said the gloomy Clabar. " Only one power can conquer Grambla, and that is terror. He is governed by his superstition."

" Red Cap may return," said Cherry.

That day was summer indeed. The next was stormy ; rain, hail, and blasts from the sea ; but beautiful in the evening when the green things of the wood were clean.

Cherry walked out, murmuring to herself, " If the world were like these woods ; and the woods always thus—life might then become too sweet."

And coming to a place, which was open yet shaded by the trees, she found herself looking upon Martin, who came towards her glancing from an open book.

" Stay ! " he called, when she was about to turn aside. " I was on my way to Halcyon."

" Well ! " said Cherry in her most masculine fashion.

" I desired to see you."

" Well ! " she said again.

" If you bark at me I shall soon be angry."

" Pass, stranger," she said carelessly. " This is one way—but the longest—to Halcyon. You have a right to walk here ; I have none to detain you. So go your way, and I will go mine."

" Do you believe I desire a conversation with your father ? "

"No, indeed, for he is an honest man, and would make ill company for you."

"I came to ask your pardon," he began.

"And the words of humbleness stick in your proud throat. I leave you to rehearse your message to the birds."

"You make me mad!" cried Martin, flinging his book upon the ground.

"So you would treat me as you do literature; but I am a book you cannot read and shall not thumbmark."

"I will read you and understand you. I will not be made sport of every day. You have even cast your influence over my father, so that he declares he loves you better than his sons. If you know what you are, tell me; and let us be enemies or friends."

"You told me my name," said Cherry bitterly.

"I was in a rage."

"Even as you are now."

"I came as a friend."

"With right hand behind your back, and the words of friendship choking you. Why should you desire to be my friend?"

"That is a question I ask myself."

"Am I not the son of poor John Clabar, and the grandson of a simple yeoman who was robbed by Grambla of his last blade of grass?"

"I believe you are not."

"Pray then, tell me who I am—but not in your own coarse language."

"How should I tell your history? My father does not know your name, but he is sure you are not Clabar's son. What is there of the Clabars about you? Your father is a swarthy man; your mother, I am told, was also dark. While you are very fair; your hair is golden, and your eyes——"

"I pray you lay aside the poets," said Cherry, interrupting him.

"So you must still answer with a taunt. I may not even receive a civil answer to my question."

"Civility is not obtained by insults," she replied. "You in your pride of birth, young gentleman, believe that a poor man's son must accept the blows you are pleased to give him. You ride with me; and expect me to hold your stirrup. You do me the honour of offering to share a chamber, and you go into a rage when I refuse. Why should I humble myself to you, whose father treats me with the utmost deference?"

"Tell me why I should take notice of you at all?" cried Martin angrily.

"Sir Thomas delights in my company; so why should not his younger son be flattered by it? I have as much learning as you, and I have far more wit. Quote me a line, and I'll give you a rhyme for it. Commence an argument, and I'll talk you out of your conceit. Why should I address the son when I may wait upon his father? Nay, I had made up my mind not to speak with you again; for, if you must have the truth, young man, I am not much honoured by your company."

"By heaven, Peter, you shall not call me young man; nor shall you speak to me in that biting fashion."

"Would you have me call you little boy? As for the manner of my speech, I must be allowed to suit myself."

"I call you coward and bully. If you were a gentleman I would challenge you," Martin shouted.

"Now the young cock lifts his comb!" said Cherry in the same taunting manner. "It is true I am no gentleman, and—since you are in the mood to hear confession—I will tell you also I am not John Clabar's son."

"I care not whose son you may be," cried Martin in a rage. "You have practised some enchantment upon me and upon my whole family."

"The younger son places himself before his family. 'Tis like you, Martin."

"You dare to call me by my Christian name!"

"Ay, Martin, a kind of swallow, a timid thing which catches flies."

"I'll stop your mouth," he shouted ; and running forward he struck his open hand upon her scornful lips.

Cherry cried out, as shame and anger forced the blood into her cheeks ; and for a moment she could hardly see the white and angry face before her. Then she said quietly, "Martin, I shall plague you for that blow. If not to-day——"

"Take off your coat," the young man shouted. "Show me the strength you boast of. You have bullied me ever since I knew you ; now you would play the coward and run. But you shall not go until you have kissed my shoes."

"I will not take off my coat," said Cherry. "Remove yours, child, and then we may stand equal."

He struck out again in the same blind fashion, and Cherry had difficulty to ward off the blow ; for the sun was in her eyes. So she ran to the other side ; and, when Martin pursued, she rounded upon him, evaded his arms, and found his ear with a small brown fist that set bells ringing in his head.

Then they fought in earnest, while the flowers looked on, and birds made sleepy music ; with this difference between them that, whereas Martin scarce knew what he was doing, Cherry remained calm and almost cold ; and this gave her some advantage over him.

Surprise sobered Martin when he discovered his opponent's strength was far less than he had looked for. Young Peter, he perceived, had by far the greater skill—and of that he had proof, being knocked down twice, once by a cut upon the jaw, again by a body-blow and slip together—but power behind was wanting. Martin, though slight, was heavier and much the taller ; but, never having been taught how to use his hands, he wasted his superior strength upon the air ; and, being in a rage, he played for victory wildly ; until his vision

cleared, and he saw those calm grey eyes looking upon him neither in mockery nor in anger.

"Your lips move! You mutter a spell," he cried.

"I believe you are beaten," she gasped.

"After to-day you will not bully me."

"After to-day I can do with you as I will."

"By sorcery then!" he shouted, closing his eyes.

"I have a power of which you know nothing—though you feel it."

"There is blood upon your face. Let us end it, Peter!"

"Not until you go down and kiss my shoes."

Neither appeared to have an advantage, although Martin was unmarked save for an angry ear; while Cherry was bleeding at the nose, her upper lip was cut, and her left eye swollen; but she was strong upon her feet, and Martin was shaken by his falls. Their long coats hampered both; the turf grew slippery; it looked as if darkness must put a stop to the unnatural combat.

Cherry felt that, so she pressed forward and, after a clever feint, struck Martin so hard upon the jaw that he reeled back; yet, in doing so, he hit out wildly, more in self-defence than in aggression; but his fist struck full upon her breast.

They were apart. Martin, leaning against a tree, his head dizzy, looked up in some terror for his opponent, knowing he could not last another blow upon the jaw. He saw young Peter crossing the open space with a staggering motion; he heard a moaning; and, half in pity, half in shame, moved forward with an outstretched hand, saying, "Peter! pardon me. Confess you went too far. What is this? I have not hurt you."

"My heart!" she gasped.

"A little blow upon the chest—I did no more than force you from me. It could not have hurt a boy. Peter, what makes you so white? What ails you?"

Even as he spoke Cherry, in her effort to escape, fell upon the grass and fainted.

"Peter, what have I done to you?" cried Martin bitterly, as he went upon his knees. "Speak to me, Peter! That little blow—it would hardly have crushed a fly. Let me unfasten your coat. Your neckband is too tight. Ah, dear Peter, I have made you bleed."

He wiped her face with his handkerchief, and restored it stained to his deep pocket; then with trembling fingers unfastened the coat and neckband, muttering in a frightened voice:

"That word of David's! How beautiful he is! Had ever a young man such a mouth—and these long eyelashes—and a skin so white!"

Scarce a minute had passed, yet Martin was running wildly through the wood. He reached Halcyon, and broke upon peaceful John Clabar at his scribbling toil upon the "Tempest." He started up to meet the young man, who could only point and mutter, "Come with me! Come and bring restoratives!"

"Is my son hurt?" cried Clabar.

"Follow!" Martin whispered; and all his other words were incoherent.

Taking a little cordial from a cupboard, Clabar ran with Martin, supposing Cherry had been bitten by a viper. They came to the clearing as darkness settled upon the wood; but Martin hardly dared to set foot upon that turf.

Cherry, having partly recovered, lifted her body upon an elbow to murmur, "Father, I grow weary of this game," as he hurried forward and pressed the cordial to her lips. While Martin stood apart, shivering like a leaf, trying to distinguish the blood-stained face, the cut lip, the swollen eye—his doing—until he could restrain himself no longer, and came forward with a cry, "Peter!"—the masculine name which represented all that was feminine to him.

"Young gentleman," said Clabar sternly. "You have done mischief enough. Leave us!"

CHAPTER IX

MARTIN IS EXPELLED FROM THE WOODLANDS

ROUGHLY hewn statues in Cornish porphyry looked somewhat terrible in the shadows of the long room which faced upon the sea. Here Sir Thomas was wont to spend much time calling gods and heroes out of stone ; and here, it was rumoured in the district, he called up spirits and sent them into the shapes of his creation which thereupon took life and moved to do his bidding. He stood there with David, bending over a veined and speckled Cupid, showing his son how to turn the chisel to avoid a flaw ; and using the occasion to give advice :

" The gentleman, who cannot employ his leisure upon some art, is little better than one of these stone figures. I would have you copy my example, David. If sculpture does not please you, learn to play the fiddle ; or even turn to carpentry. For an idle gentleman is apt to become sottish in his manners."

" This Cupid's face," the young man muttered, " is surely modelled from the features of young Clabar."

" Could you find a better type ? "

" I believe not, sir. There is nothing of the common in his features."

" Now the work requires a touch yet more delicate. Look ye, David ! A slip at this line of the neck, and all is marred. It grows dark. Light candles."

Sir Thomas retired to the far end of the room for a finer chisel ; passing between the statues which seemed to become more life-like by his movements. The door burst open and Martin hurried in.

"David!" he cried. "Where is our father? Oh, David, I have fought with Peter! I hurt her—I have cut her mouth, and bruised her eye."

"Her!" cried David, forgetting the nearness of their father.

"You are right, brother. Feminine was your word. She is beautiful—she is adorable—and I have done my best to kill her."

"She is a maid—Peter a maid!" David muttered. Then he rounded upon Martin and cried, "You fought with her! You struck her upon the eyes and mouth—you have done her some injury. You are a scoundrel, brother."

"I could not bear her taunts."

"You shall settle with me," cried David; and, starting forward, he seized his brother by the throat.

"David! Martin!" called a voice, terribly stern; then Sir Thomas advanced towards them along the avenue of sombre statuary. The young men parted and stood at some distance from each other; David scowling, Martin shivering.

"I heard you, Martin. You have disgraced my name, and your own young manhood, by striking Cherry Clabar—for so she is called—in spite of what I told you yesterday. When was it, sir, you learnt to defy your father?"

"Your command, sir, never came into my mind," whispered the unhappy Martin. "I went into the woods, hoping to find Peter, that I might ask her pardon. We met by chance; she was more than usual bitter, and I struck her. I seem to have been dreaming and am just awake. She fell at last and fainted. She cried out, 'My heart!' I pray you, sir, forgive me."

"Did you strike him, David?" asked Sir Thomas.

"I would have struck him for a coward, sir, had you not joined us."

"I am glad to hear you say so; for I would have you protect the honour—and when necessary the body

—of this young lady. As for you, Martin, I shall treat you as a child who has refused obedience. Get you to your bedroom, and there remain until I visit you. David, attend me."

Martin slunk away, while the others left the house, and were absent an hour. As they returned along the avenue, Sir Thomas placed a hand upon David's arm and inquired what he thought of the fair Miss Clabar.

"She has not her equal in the world, sir. Some girls are strong, and many are beautiful; but she unites in herself the perfection of strength and beauty," came the answer.

"What are your feelings towards her, David?"

"I can hardly answer you, sir. An hour ago I thought she was a man. I am not yet reconciled to the truth. But, sir, I admire her vastly."

"When you marry, David, it is my intention to withdraw from England, and to end my life with your mother in her native land; leaving you as master of Bezurrel. You have my permission, David, to make Miss Cherry your wife."

"My wife, sir! The daughter of John Clabar, as 'tis said!" exclaimed the young man.

"I am proud of my name, and jealous for the honour of my family. Yet I tell you nothing would please me more than to greet Cherry Clabar as the bride of my elder son. Why did you take your brother by the throat?"

"It seemed to me, sir, he had played the part of a scoundrel."

"Was it not jealousy, David?"

"I believe it was not, sir."

They entered the house and Sir Thomas, after a few words with my lady, went to Martin's room; which lay in darkness, for the summer night was clouded.

"Are you abed?" the father called.

"I am here, sir; beside the window."

Sir Thomas closed the door and groped towards a

chair, saying, "We need no candle for a conversation. Your conduct, Martin, has displeased me greatly. You have shown a love for learning which made me dream of a noble future. Now I find, if you are sober in life, you are most passionate in your nature."

"It is true, sir, I never could control my temper when Peter mocked me," Martin answered.

"Miss Clabar is her name."

"I shall always think of her as Peter. I would go to her now, father, and—and kiss her shoes, and find out how she does."

"I come from Halcyon, where I presented your brother to Miss Clabar."

"David, sir!"

"Whom you will regard in the future as the custodian of Bezurrel Woods," said Sir Thomas sharply. "Miss Clabar is recovered. She desired me to inform you—"

"Yes, sir!"

"She bears you no malice. She promises to whip you with her tongue."

"Let her say what she will. What was a taunt yesterday shall be a compliment to-morrow."

"I have more to say," continued Sir Thomas, rising; and though Martin could not see his father, he was conscious of the dark figure towering over him; and he felt rebellious against discipline.

"I have referred to your studious habits. These have led me to suppose you may have a longing for the priesthood."

"You are mistaken, sir."

"I do not mean a priest of this land, where our holy religion is forbidden; I would not see a son of mine a priest of dark corners such as Father Benedict. When David marries, your mother and I propose to return to Italy; and we would take you with us, Martin."

"Do you insist upon my ordination, sir?"

"I would not permit that course unless I were

convinced you had a clear vocation. It appears I have read your nature wrongly."

"I have no desire for Italy," said Martin firmly. "I would remain here, sir; I believe I am the only one of my family who cares for Bezurrel and Moyle church-town. If I may speak plainly, sir, I would say there is something foreign in your nature. You have lived abroad so long, you have little love for this property of your ancestors. You have enjoyed the Italian climate until you cannot bear the mists of Cornwall. David also has no longing to remain here. But I love this wild coast, Bezurrel Castle, and the fields around it; but most of all I love the woodlands. A younger son must not expect to be given his choice—yet I would remain here all my life."

"Bravely spoken, Martin," said the father with more kindness. "But if you would have me yield to your request, you must show some inclination to obey. Bezurrel is settled upon David, and cannot pass to you without his consent. Are you anxious to please me, Martin?"

"I have always sought to please you, my father; and I shall continue to do so, while you do not put upon me more than I can bear."

"I will try you then. You are forgiven your conduct of to-day upon a certain understanding."

"There is but one command, sir, which I shall find myself unable to obey."

"You are not again to visit the young lady whom we call Miss Clabar."

"Sir, that is the one thing impossible."

"You resist me, Martin?"

"Not I, sir. Something stronger than myself resists."

"I tell you, Martin, my mind is fixed upon this matter."

"You think, sir, that because she has no fortune, and is of somewhat mean birth, she is not worthy of

me. I can understand, sir, she could not marry David ; but I am the younger son."

"I must clip your wings," said Sir Thomas grimly. "You are not worthy of her."

"Peter of the woods—of the cottage!" Martin murmured.

"I hope to see her mistress of Bezurrel, and your brother's wife."

"It is dark," cried Martin with difficulty. "Why, sir, do you make it darker?"

"I require your submission, and demand your obedience. Remember, no father injures his son without good reason. You are to regard Bezurrel Woods as out of bounds ; and should you meet Miss Clabar by chance in other places, you are to behave with the civility of a gentleman who meets a friend—and nothing more."

"You have spoken your last word, sir?"

"And I will hear no answer."

Sir Thomas felt for his son's hand, pressed it in a kindly fashion, then departed. Soon the lights went out, and Bezurrel Castle became wrapped in darkness ; but Martin sat beside that open window half the night.

The morning was heavy and wreaths of mist hung upon the sea. David went out early, and Martin watched him from a window ; to see his brother go towards the stable, and ride out presently in the direction of Great Gwentor. Martin went into the library and read from Homer for an hour. Then he looked up and saw that Father Benedict was near him.

"I have a question to ask you," he said. "How many of these books would have been written, had there been no Helens in the world?"

"Many, my son," replied the old priest, "and all the best. Helens do not aid theology, but mar it."

"Ah, but how many of these books would have detained a young man in a library upon a summer's morning, had there been no Helens?"

"That is too hard a question," said Father Benedict.

Martin went into the avenue and along it to the gate. Without a pause he took the road to the left, entered the forbidden woods, and proceeded along the well-loved footpath to the flaming garden and the small thatched cottage. A murmur of voices warmed his heart.

"Father Benedict is wrong," he murmured. "Helens do not mar theology."

"So!" cried Cherry, who opened the door to him. "You are come for your whipping."

"I am come," said Martin, not bowing his head; since he could not remove his eyes from her face, which was bright brown again, and fresher than it had been yesterday, "to kneel at your feet and beg for your forgiveness."

"I would rather you stood upright."

"It is easier to obey you than my father."

Cherry slipped out when he had spoken, murmuring, "that tells a story," and motioned him to follow. They passed into the woodland, out of sight of the cot, beneath a natural archway of wild-rose; and so to an arbour of honeysuckle where it fell from a tree.

"I beg you not to refer again to the events of yesterday—yet I know we are to talk of nothing else," she began. "We have both done wrong; but I feared you played with me. That night at the ale-house I was sure you had penetrated my disguise; which you must admit I carry well. Let us have no more fighting—nor yet words together. I am Peter no longer to you. Yesterday I was a careless fellow. Now I have a maiden's soul."

"May I not call you Peter still?"

"Why should you call to a phantom?"

"I would call to the new soul by the old name. Mistress Clabar is too hard for me. As Peter I came to know you; walked and studied with you. As Peter I see you now—with your lip bruised, your eye swollen, by this cursed hand."

"Do not curse your hand ; else you will make me blame my tongue. Our walks are over," said Cherry firmly. "Last evening Sir Thomas and your brother came to visit me. Can you explain your father's great affection for me ? "

"He loves you with all his soul."

"I believe that is not possible ; but let it pass. Sir Thomas presents your brother, and hopes I may show him kindness—and not beat him ; and desires me not to walk with you again. Now, sir, has he not commanded you to keep away from these woods ? "

"He has done so," said Martin with a groan.

"I do not understand Sir Thomas. He wishes me to smile upon his heir, and to frown upon his younger son. Have I not always frowned upon you ? In these boy's clothes I may laugh and shout ; but surely I must not smile."

"Ah, Peter ; how you have changed ! "

"If you call Peter, you may rouse the dead."

"I would like to hear the old voice. Will you not be Peter again ? "

"Never ! "

"Taunt me, and mock me, and call me all manner of names. I would welcome abuse if it came from you."

"Never again ! " she cried. "So you too have changed. How angry you would get ! And now you cry to suffer again ! But do I not play the boy prettily ? "

He advanced from the arbour, and she shrank back, saying, "Nay, do not answer. Until I wear a gown I may be bold. What are you doing here ? It is no small matter to disobey your father."

"Last night I warned him I should not obey. I will take off my fine coat and serve as his footman. I will demean myself in any way to please him. But when he tells me I am not to visit Peter, nor to walk with Peter, I shall not obey."

"Has Peter then no mind to be consulted?"

"She is with me now."

"There is still some doubt remaining about the sex of Peter," she said lightly. "Let us clear away this difficulty. Peter was a wild and careless lad—who yet exists for all except your family—and yesterday he was struck a mortal blow and died a natural death upon the grass. All the birds of the woods sang a dirge last night for poor dead Peter! Do you propose, young gentleman, to visit a most unpleasant corpse? If that is your desire, I cannot tell you where to find the body. Your wise father understands this difficulty. 'Young Peter is dead,' says he. 'My younger son has killed the rascal, therefore 'tis plain the two cannot meet again.' But then it appears Peter was fashioned so curiously that, immediately he died, a mischievous wench of a sister must stand upright in his shoes. Your wise father pondered over this also, and he says, 'I believe my son David may be trusted with this wench Cherry, therefore he shall walk with her, if he so will; and I shall ask her to be kind to him. But my son Martin must not be permitted to go near her, for his own safety. The wench will do him mischief, I warrant, to avenge that other half, poor brother Peter, whom my son Martin maliciously slew.' Now, sir, have I not made this matter plain to you?"

"Cherry!" he cried, carried away by her charm of speech and manner.

"Oh, hush!" she whispered, placing a finger on her lips. "Pray respect my brother's memory."

"David cannot be trusted with young ladies," he said shamefully.

"You must not speak so. Here is one, who can not only defend herself, but has punished a drunken man who beat his wife. But are we not merely talking—as if to pass the time together? It is my duty to see that your father's wishes are respected. If you disobey—that is for you to answer. I shall not be disobedient

to my patron. Nay, I shall not let you offend the kindest man that lives. I address you now, Mr. Martin Just, for the last time upon the old footing ; and when friends part—we have been friends, I think—they will speak as kindly as they can.”

“ Mistress Cherry, I will not submit.”

“ Are we not foolish when we make that cry ? ”

“ Yes, when we make it against heaven.”

“ They who order our destiny represent to us the power of heaven. Believe me your father is kind, though he seems to work in a mysterious way. Friend, good-bye ! ’Tis Peter speaking.”

She put out her right hand, and Martin seized it, but would not let it go. She smiled, and drew it free, saying, “ It is good to fight a tyrant, or to resist any evil which seems stronger than ourselves ; but sometimes it is bravest to submit.”

“ Why should friends part ? ”

“ You may not harm yourself by disobedience ; but you will injure me.”

“ If my father plays the tyrant—why should he ? ”

“ That is not for me to answer.”

“ It is no question of birth or fortune ; for he is willing—anxious—that you and David should be friends. Let him dare ! He cannot be your friend—not as I am.”

“ Still you ignore me,” said Cherry impatiently. “ My father says this ; my father does that. Come out of the influence of your father and regard my feelings ; and hear my voice in this matter. Friendship is a contract to which both parties must set their hands and seals. My signature is lacking.”

“ It is an unwritten contract,” urged Martin. “ The very act of setting it down in black and white would destroy the mutual trust, which is the foundation of all friendship. You have signed with your voice, and sealed with your eyes.”

“ I repudiate Peter with all his forgeries.”

"You have given me a bond ; and now would tear it up before my eyes."

"We are getting involved in metaphor like two wrangling attorneys. Let us return to simple speech ; and not mar farewell by flinging learning at each other. I am sorry to end our walks and conversations ; I shall think with pleasure of our quarrels ; but I shall obey the wishes of my patron, who has protected John Clabar against his enemy, and provided us with the happiest home, and has given me a place to worship in, and granted me the liberty of these woods. So I bid you farewell, and may God be with you."

"You shall not leave me," cried Martin. "I will answer the question I just now put to you—why should my father play the tyrant ? It is because he knows I loved you as Peter—ay, loved you, as I feared, unnaturally——"

"I must leave you," broke in Cherry. She retreated a few steps, then hesitated to murmur, "I believe there is nothing more to say ?"

"And now you are Cherry. You stand before me, clad in the garments of my dear friend Peter, but a princess in disguise, a most lovely maiden. And I fought with you, more out of love than hatred—I know not why—and I shed your blood—I bruised your beautiful face."

"This is a strange parting, friend," she murmured ; but did not go, although she was so fleet of foot he could hardly race with her.

"I have the stained handkerchief beneath my coat ; I shall wear it every day. It is because my father knows this—knows I shall transfer my love from Peter to Cherry, and make it natural—I perceive now it was indeed an honest love—it is because he knows I do love you, and seek you for my wife, that he issues this cruel order, separating me from you. I will not leave you until I hear my sentence from your lips."

She put up her arm and plucked a sprig of honeysuckle. She threw it upon the grass between them, and said in a voice scarce higher than a whisper :

" This is the barrier which you may not cross to me ; nor I to you. It is the barrier also which divides the romance of Bezurrel Woods from the dark ways of the world. You must know," she went on, with her gaze fixed upon the flowering grasses, " Peter, though a rascal, was not dull. He could see all that a maiden does see. He declared sorrow had no existence—or rather that it could not exist while we lead an easy and a natural life. Yet he knew there are stinging-bees in the honeysuckle and vipers at Halcyon. But he knew also it is possible to raise a barrier of sweet-scented flowers between the world of romance and that whole horrid land of darkness that we shrink from—and ever to remain upon the romantic side. We appear to dwell in two different worlds at present. Yet, I do assure you, we are separated only by the honeysuckle."

" Can you love me, Cherry ? "

" Do not cross my frontier. Perceive the large humble-bee, who is my officer ! "

" Answer me with an acceptance, lovely sweetheart ; and I go to my father like a hero."

" Scarred by his campaigns ! With news of a fresh engagement—great tidings of battle," she said. " Carry the honeysuckle to Sir Thomas, if you will, and say I gave it you. And tell him, what my hand has placed between us, his hand must remove."

" Promise at least you have some affection for me."

" Love for my brother's murderer, Martin ! Oh, for shame ! "

CHAPTER X

THE YOUNGER SON DOES BUT LITTLE GOOD FOR HIMSELF

A SULLENNESS came over Martin. He was short with Sir Thomas, who chose to take no notice of his wilfulness ; treated David with cold civility ; but revealed his heart to my lady, and opened his soul to Father Benedict. The mother, while upholding her husband, sympathised in secret with her son. The old priest spoke with uncommon harshness, and inflicted a penance, which one fears was not observed.

"Sir Thomas," said her ladyship at last, "do you not perceive what is going on before your eyes ?"

"I see it very well," he answered. "But I desire our sons to settle their differences without my interference. They are young English gentlemen."

"My father was a noted fighter. Both my brothers are much addicted to the duello," she warned him.

"I have not forgot," said Sir Thomas. "Within the next few days I start for London. Martin, I believe, will determine the date of my departure. David will brood over an insult. Martin strikes at once."

After that Sir Thomas made much of his younger son, and appeared not to notice his delinquencies ; which to be sure were hardly serious, for though he often trespassed in Bezurrel Woods, he had no speech with Cherry ; that young lady being obdurate. But Martin put a wrong construction upon his father's forbearance, and became more open in his disobedience, and allowed his feelings play.

"I trust Mistress Clabar is well, David," he would say

in a sneering fashion. "Yet I do not know how you can tell me, for I believe you seldom visit her."

One evening the brothers met just within the wood; indeed, Martin was not more than a dozen paces from the lane, when he saw David advancing towards him; hearing him first because the young man whistled as he walked. Fir-trees grew in that place, and a few cones had fallen. Martin was angered by the knowledge that David came from Halcyon; therefore he took a cone and threw it so that it struck his brother upon the chest.

"I see what it is, Martin," said David, stopping short upon the path. "You mean to challenge me."

"You may take my action as you will," cried Martin.

"I will have you know this, brother," replied David. "You are out of bounds. These woods are mine, and I do not choose to have you walking here."

"It is tyranny indeed when a son may not walk upon his father's property," cried Martin hotly.

"There is no tyranny. My father has appointed me the guardian of these woods, and he has forbidden you to enter them. You gain nothing by displeasing us."

"Us!" exclaimed Martin with increasing anger.

"I am the heir. All this property will be mine. You are entitled to nothing save what the generosity of my father may bestow. The younger son must be kept in his place. You are rebelling against us, brother."

"He swells with a word of two letters like the frog in the fable," said Martin with contempt.

"Brother, you have been strange with me lately," David continued, still keeping his good humour. "I believe you study too much. You have it in your mind that I am supplanting you—to be plain, you are jealous."

"I shall always stand up to claim what is my right."

"But understand, brother, you shall not insult me. I will not have you lurking in these woods, until my father withdraws his prohibition; nor shall I permit you to throw fir-cones at me. I am a year older than you; and a year stronger."

"I am ten years cleverer."

"That may be. The law of descent does not include brains in the reckoning. You may read Latin, and enjoy Greek—which for my part I detest—but all the learning in the world cannot make you the heir. I shall not abate one jot of my privileges. Come, brother!" said David in a kindly voice. "We have been uncommon good friends—side by side we fought against the town at Oxford. Hang me if I will bear you enmity."

"A pretty speech," said Martin bitterly. "Why indeed should the one who has possession of the loaf bear enmity to the crumb-snatcher? I admit your right to the first place in my father's favour, to the chief part of his wealth, to the whole of his landed property; for you had the fortune to come first into the world."

"But you will not admit my right to Mistress Clabar. I fear, brother, we cannot melt her into guineas nor yet divide her into acres."

"You are a rascal; ay, a precious blackguard," Martin shouted, almost choking in his passion.

"Calm yourself, brother," said David coldly.

"I will when I have beat you. With a smile upon your face you talk of sharing her that you may mock me. Divide her! Would I spare you a single hair from her head, were you mad for it? Could you allow the thought to come into your mind if you loved her? I would spare you nothing—not a blade of grass her foot had pressed."

"Brother," muttered David, beginning to glow, "you had best get home, and shut yourself up with your favourite author."

"I will fight you, rascal! Ay, and I'll fight my father, and any other man who stands between Cherry and myself, whether he be giant or pygmy."

"You are a fool, Martin, to arouse my anger," said David, dropping at last the friendly title of brother. "You cannot beat me; and if you could you would

find yourself no better for it. My father desires his heir to marry Mistress Clabar ; and I am like to be more obedient than yourself."

" You may beat me ; but unless you kill me——"

" Let's have no more of this," broke in David roughly. " Look at this arm—twice the strength of yours—an arm which has broken horses ; while yours has done little save hold a book—and whip a woman."

" You dog !" sobbed Martin. Then he stumbled towards his brother and kicked him.

David went white and had much difficulty to restrain himself. He put out his arm and pushed Martin off, murmuring, " We must wipe this out."

" With pistols ! If you take her from me, you may kill me. If I kill you, I may win her yet."

" Swords," said David thickly. " I'll use no other weapon."

" I swear to bring a pistol and shoot you. Follow me—or if you must play the tyrant walk in front."

It was not far to the clearing where the battle with Cherry had taken place ; and here Martin paused, groaning with memories, and carrying a passion far too strong for him ; and said as calmly as was possible, " In this place at sunrise—unless you choose to play the coward."

" I would advise you to restrain your tongue, Martin," said his brother fiercely. " I am far more cool than yourself, though you have called me dog and kicked me ; yet I have passion in me. I have no wish to be the only son."

" The younger, it seems, is not allowed to live. Go your way now. We do not meet again, nor speak, until the dawn."

" Martin !" called David, conquering his baser feelings with an effort, " I am bound in honour not to mention this affair to any person. It is my present purpose to bring no weapon. I will meet you here, and fight you ; but let it be in manly fashion with the fists."

"This is for Cherry," shouted Martin. "And for her I will fight you to the death."

He staggered away into the wood, blind to the path-way ; while David went in the opposite direction, muttering :

"This is like to be an awful business, and my lips are sealed. I must get first to the house and hide the pistols. If the crazed fool knew all, he would not threaten, and he would not fight ; but here again my lips are sealed by honour."

Dinner at Bezurrel was served at five, and had therefore been partaken of before the meeting of the brothers in the wood. Martin went towards Great Gwentor, that he might moan for an hour among the rocks. David returned with all possible speed ; and some minutes later grave John Clabar waited upon Sir Thomas at the outward door with an urgent message.

"Come within, honest John," said the baronet, taking him by the hand.

"I thank you, sir, but would not detain you. I come like the bird of night, I fear, to croak ill-omen," replied the clerk.

"'Tis a fine evening. I will take a turn with you in the park," said Sir Thomas, calling to a servant for his hat and cane.

"Will you not take your cloak, sir ? "

"Why should I, John ? "

"You said 'tis a fine evening ; but I can perceive that a storm is coming upward from the sea."

"Give me my cloak," Sir Thomas ordered.

They walked a little way along the avenue, then turned into the open park. Here Clabar pointed toward the north and said, "You may see yonder, travelling slowly, clouds like dark fleeces. When these settle of an evening, sir, the night promises to be wild."

"And you come with these clouds to bring me ill tidings of my sons."

"Nay, sir, if you know all I might have spared my labour."

"What is your knowledge?"

"I was taking my evening walk through the woods, when I heard high voices. I listened for some time, deeming it my duty to do so, for I could tell the sounds were full of danger to your house. It was not necessary to advance and play the spy, for the voices would almost have carried to my door. Sir, your two sons propose to fight at daybreak."

"Your daughter, John!" exclaimed Sir Thomas, after a moment's silence. "I have longed for a lovely daughter, even like Cherry—and now, John! Providence gives with one hand, but threatens to take away with the other."

"Sir, you will take some immediate action; for I do not like to mention this to Cherry."

"You are right, John. Do not vex her with a tale of mischief she is in innocence guilty of. Yet I would speak to her. Await me here, while I return to see my lady, and give some orders."

Clabar had not long to lean against a tree with folded arms, watching the changes in the northern sky; for Sir Thomas was quick in action when his mind was settled. They went together towards the woods, where darkness had fallen; and as they entered the shadows Sir Thomas stopped his companion to wring his hand.

"You have rendered me the greatest service, honest John," he said with some emotion. "This is a matter which must have escaped my knowledge. You believe I know everything, yet you do not think so in your heart, since you came to warn me. It is true I knew something of this matter, but not the whole; and without your added information my knowledge would have availed me nothing. Therefore I thank you with all my soul."

"Sir, I am heavily in your debt," replied Clabar.

They discovered Cherry engaged among her flowers,

though it was difficult to see ; destroying slugs, and seeking to trap a mole which worked havoc in the border. Sending Clabar within, Sir Thomas drew Cherry outside the fence, and told her he was likely to be absent for some weeks, during which time he desired her to go often to Bezurrel and entertain my lady with her chatter.

" Gladly," she said. " Do you go in search of Ruth?"

" I shall strive my utmost to discover her. To-night I visit you, that I may say farewell, dear child ; and warn you against Grambla."

" He does not enter into my existence," she said scornfully. " Long ago I swore to whip him, but now I think he is not worth the trouble ; for he has become like one of these black slugs, slow and lazy, hiding by day and prowling at night. Indeed, I would no longer wear these clothes did I not feel so much at my ease in them."

" Peace, pretty chatterer !" said Sir Thomas. " Grambla will soon awake from his stupor and commence mischief. It may happen before my return, and so I warn you. If he tempts you to enter Coinagehall, do not go. And should you see strangers in Moyle, beware of them ; for Grambla may devise some plan to carry you away."

" Now you approach the real purpose of your visit," said Cherry, when he seemed to hesitate. " A woman is supposed to enjoy the last word ; and that is true when 'tis the word of conquest. But a man will talk of a thousand idle matters before he reaches the words he came to utter."

" Sorceress !" said Sir Thomas. " When the cry goes up to drown the witch of Moyle, it will not be Mother Gothel we must rescue. I have some words for your ear, young lady. You remember your first visit to Bezurrel ? "

" When you read from a book of magic and confounded me ! "

"And when I spoke of a danger threatening my house—though indeed I did not see it in the form now present."

"I carried that warning to my bed. And next morning I perceived your meaning. You were warning me truth might come out some day, and then it might so happen one of your sons might take a liking for me—amazing things must happen in a world of wonder—and it would be my duty to frown him away; for 'tis 'nay, young gentleman,' when the maid is poor and lowly, and the young gentleman of quality puts the question. I have learnt at least the grammar of your warning. Your younger son has honoured me with the question—which was indeed put somewhat in the form of an eleventh commandment; thou shalt not have any other man but me—and I sent him from me with a whipping."

"It was bravely done, dear child," said Sir Thomas, using a lover's voice himself. "I come to-night to withdraw those words, and to issue these in place of them. If you have affection for either of my sons, I beg you not to hide it at the moment when a maiden may express her feelings; for I have so far changed my mind that now, should David ask for my consent to wed you, I shall with the utmost happiness give that consent, also my blessing to the union."

"A change indeed! What has caused it—not, I believe, my face?"

"It has served."

"Nor yet my character?"

"That too has served."

"Nor my happiness, my strength; nay, at this moment I shall add courage? I begin to discover virtues in myself."

"All these have helped, my chattering piece of vanity."

"Come, listen! I have other questions."

"Which you shall address to the storm. Let thunder

answer," replied Sir Thomas, drawing the cloak about him ; for the wood became merry with tapping of rain on leaves.

" I beg you to answer—do you know anything of a sprig of honeysuckle ? "

" You are talking of some dream, child."

" It lay upon the ground as a boundary between my kingdom and yours ; and your hand could alone remove it. Now you withdraw the barrier and throw two kingdoms into one. Bezurrel Castle is now joined to Halcyon Cottage. Ay, the court is at Halcyon. We must plant trees, and scatter flower-seeds, so that Bezurrel may be brought into the woodland. Oaks only, Sir Thomas, and honeysuckle shall climb up every one. Now the thunder rumbles. I need not escort you to the frontier, for the barrier is down."

" You are a madcap maid ! "

" Free, Sir Thomas ! Free and happy ! This storm is out of place, for the elements should be calm while happiness is hatching. Here is a mischievous attempt of some demon to blast out a pathway by which sorrow may crawl in. Farewell, Sir Thomas ! Good angels guard the trees you walk beneath."

" Sweetheart, good-bye ! Were you my own daughter I could not love you more."

The storm grew fierce as Martin reached Bezurrel. Being informed that my lady desired to see him, he went to her at once ; and was told : " I am making changes in the house, and have placed you for to-night in a different chamber."

" Nearer your own, mother ? " he inquired suspiciously.

" On the contrary ; further away."

" I thought, mother, you might wish to hear me when I entered or left my room."

" That was not in my mind," she said.

Martin remained with his mother some little time, for she detained him ; and when they parted for the night

she embraced him with more than her usual affection ; so that his suspicions became again aroused, and he asked if she had seen his brother.

" David has not been with me," her ladyship replied. " I am a little troubled, dear son, for I may lose you soon. Your father determines to send you upon the Continent, where you will visit some of my relations, and complete your education by seeing something of the world. You will return, I know, a brave and honest English gentleman ; yet I know also the son I shall receive cannot be quite the same as the dear wilful lad I send away."

" You have some fear for me, my mother."

" I fear your nature, Martin. You are over-ready to take offence, and apt to strike the friend who, it may be, has nothing but affection for you. This lesson you are to learn : control the little demon who whispers of fighting in your ear, seek no quarrel, and do not draw your sword save in defence of your own, or another's, honour. You have courage, Martin. That will not serve until you acquire restraint."

There was no sleep for Martin in the different chamber, to which he hardly noticed no portion of his wardrobe had been moved. The storm continued until midnight ; not only upon land and sea, but within his body also. He dreaded the approach of morning, and grew cold as he watched the sky for the first breaking of light which was to summon him to the clearing in the wood. No withdrawal was then possible ; he could not go to David's room and offer his hand. That would be cowardice. Neither could David come to him.

Yet a footstep sounded along the passage, and a hand knocked firmly at the door. Martin made an effort to answer, but, when no sound issued from his lips, he left the bed and advanced to the door, fully expecting to find his brother ; for he forgot that David would not know of the different arrangement of the chambers. He was amazed to find the door already open. Day had

not yet broken, while the figure standing by the threshold held no light.

"David!" he whispered.

"Martin!"

"Father!"

"Dress yourself and follow me."

"But, father——"

"No words! Disobey me now, and I use you as a child, and call the men-servants to dress you. Do not speak to me again."

He went along the passage and called for lights. A servant brought candles, and Martin dressed; while Sir Thomas stood by, stern and silent. Then he gripped his son by the arm, and led him down.

The house was lighted, and servants were bustling as though it had been day. Martin was led into the dining-room, and here to his amazement discovered breakfast set out. Sir Thomas forced him into a chair, seated himself opposite, and still not a word was spoken. But Martin could hear the bumping of luggage, and while he tried to swallow meat and drink, horses pranced, wheels rolled, and there came the flash of lamps across the windows.

"Father!" he cried, springing up. "It must be daybreak."

"Be seated, Martin!"

"Sir, I must go out or be dishonoured."

"Finish your breakfast."

"I can eat no more."

"Then come!"

"I do not go."

"Martin," said Sir Thomas, "I give you the choice of walking with me to the coach, or of being taken there by force."

"You are carrying me away, sir!"

"Ay, from yourself."

"And from Cherry," Martin whispered. Then he cried again, "Sir, I do not go!"

Sir Thomas went swiftly to the door. Pausing there, he took out his watch and held it near the flame of a candle, then said quietly, "I give you one minute. When it expires, I call the grooms."

A few seconds they stood, the father beside the candle, the son leaning over the table. Then Martin flung the chair back, and walked towards the door, passionate tears streaming down his face. Sir Thomas replaced the watch in his fob, and followed. A few minutes afterwards the coach rolled down the avenue, and entered the lane which would lead into the London road.

PART III

CHAPTER I

RUTH AND HER MEDICAL ATTENDANT ARRIVE AT SALISBURY

FORTUNE favoured Ruth and her young gentleman, so that they arrived at the ancient city of Salisbury after as easy a journey as any couple could have wished for. Having still a good stock of the Grambla guineas, they put up at an inn, engaged rooms, ordered a dinner, and proceeded to make themselves at home within a snug-box of the coffee-room. Ruth, who passed as Miss Cay, a name which she had no reason to dislike, was exceedingly weary ; while her hero, who had fallen somewhat from grace, owing to a sinful craving after the diamond necklace, chatted in a most excited fashion :

“ We are now in my uncle’s country, Ruthie, and within ten miles of the only place I am able to call home. To-morrow we ride over as desolate a road as you will find in England, leading across these Wiltshire downs, where I wandered as a youth, praying Providence to send me some damsel a thousand times less fair than yourself to share my solitude. We shall face the old curmudgeon in his den ; myself in the penitential attitude of the prodigal returned ; my Ruthie all tears, like Niobe. I shall offer the old scoundrel my good horse—’twill melt him, I warrant, for he had always a mighty taste for horse-flesh—and promise him I bring a young lady of fortune who has

sworn to have me. And after that we go on our knees to beg a blessing. Horse, penitence, beauty, and fortune, shall strike the milk of human kindness from the flint of his heart ; and I believe we shall receive a hearty welcome."

"That may be, Harry ; but I do not like to hear you abuse the old gentleman," said Ruth severely.

"Why, sweetheart, did he not turn me out into the world ? "

"I fear you were always a rogue, and such deserve harsh treatment. I may yet run, if you do not improve under my teaching. It is, however, my consolation to know that you cannot be hanged."

"Sweetheart, do not call up ghosts," he pleaded. "We shall sight a gallows as we ride in the morning ; and I do not wish to look in that direction."

"Dear Harry, I do but remind you we are not yet clear of difficulties. Your uncle may not receive us, and what shall we do then ? "

"In that case, Ruthie, I can think of nothing but a trip to London."

"You may be recognised as the ghost of that most infamous scoundrel, Black Harry—now dead, thank God ! "

"I am as like to receive a tap on the shoulder in this city of Salisbury as there. My horse is stolen, so are my clothes. These guineas are my only property won fairly, yet justice would declare I stole them as well."

"And this ring upon my finger ? "

"Stolen, my love."

"Ah, Harry, what wretches we are, for by loving you I make myself the partner of your sins."

"You forget, little one ! I am now become a reformed character, and these my sins—which I repent of heartily—have been washed away."

"That is true," said Ruth, always ready to defend her new theology. "Yet consider the danger, Harry !

A coach may drive to this door ; the owner of these clothes may enter. He would not listen to your words of penitence ; while the justices—who, I have been informed, are a most unregenerate lot—would mock at the story of your baptism."

"I have changed my character, love, and at the first opportunity I shall change my clothes."

"Return to our plans for the future," said Ruth.

"If you travel to London, I do not accompany you."

"Sweetheart, our marriage !"

"Be patient, Harry. If I could aid you as a wife, I would indeed be married to you in some dark corner ; but I believe it will be best to wait until we see our way more clearly. If your uncle is kind—very well ! If not, you shall go upon your journey—after first providing yourself with other garments—while I shall find a decent lodging. But first you must write for me to Sir Thomas, begging him to sell my jewels," said Ruth, joyously adding, "It is a fine thing for a maid who does not even know her name to have such jewels for sale."

"He may keep them by him for many weeks," said Cay. "Nor can he make a sale until he goes to London. In the meantime, should my uncle not offer his hospitality, we must starve, unless I obtain honest employment in the metropolis ; for I am not dull enough to work in the country."

"What honest employment do you know of, Harry ?"

"I am best acquainted, love, with gaming-houses."

"What goes on there, Harry ?"

"Games of cards are played, and gentlemen speculate with sums of money ; yet by some strange mischance they always lose."

"Is honesty always practised ?" she asked earnestly.

"I fear, little one, there may be sometimes corruption in the management. There are a great number of officials attached to these houses ; and, while the majority act with honesty, or are indeed not

indifferent to that virtue, others are little better than common cheats."

"Then I pray you have nothing to do with such people."

"A man in need of employment may sniff at his butter, but he must not despise his bread," said Cay. "I should enroll myself among the number of officials who are honest; and for your information, sweetheart, I shall tell you their names, and what manner of duties they perform. First, we have the gentleman known as Commissioner, who is always a proprietor, and looks in of a night to watch the run of the game, and audits the weekly accounts; he, for all I know, may be a churchwarden and very honest fellow. Next in rank comes the Director, who has charge of the room, and, as 'tis a part of his duty to see that the play be fair, he will indeed be honest. The Operator has merely to deal the cards, and whether he does so fairly, or employs a trick, we are not to know; therefore we shall give him the benefit of the doubt, and call him honest. Two Crowpees, one upon either side of the table, keep their eyes upon the cards, and accept money for the bank; these gentlemen, being cashiers and occupying a position of trust, are surely upright. The Puff is a pleasing fellow, who is supplied with money to decoy others to play; while the Clerk is a check upon the Puff, to see that he uses not the money for himself. The Squib is a Puff of lower rank. The Flasher is a gentleman of loud voice, very finely clad, who walks about the room, swearing he has himself broke the bank many times. The Captain, who is retired from the army, fights any gentleman who is peevish after losing his money. The Attorney, who is a solicitor from Newgate, gives the law to the company. The Dunner goes about to receive money lost. The Waiter serves wine and snuffs the candles. The Usher lights gentlemen up and down the stairs. The Porter, who is dismissed

from the army, is stationed at the door to challenge suspicious characters. The Orderly Man walks up and down outside the house, and makes a signal to the Porter at any approach of constables. While the Runner gets knowledge of the movements of justices. Besides these regular officials are link-boys, chairmen, and drawers, who receive a reward of half a guinea for bringing news of justices meeting or constables being out. And attached to the house are many Bails, Affidavit-men, Bravos, and Money-lenders for the convenience of patrons."

"I am convinced they are a parcel of scoundrels; and would rather you filled mud-holes in the public roads than be associated with such people," said Ruth vehemently.

"The employments that are open to the gentleman of no profession are few, dear Ruthie. If you like not the gaming-house, I must even try for a living upon the turf."

"What is done upon the turf? Would you turn gardener, Harry?"

"Nay, child! I would act as the agent of gentlemen who would buy or sell running horses."

"I like not that either," she declared.

"Then, sweetheart, I must write for the book-sellers."

"Dear Harry," said Ruth gravely, "I am indeed sorry to think you cannot devise a decent way of living."

Their conversation was interrupted by a marvelously thin waiter with unhappy eyes, who came that moment to prepare the table. Cay inquired whether they had in the house a London newspaper. "For," said he in a whisper to Ruth, "I would scan the advertisements."

The waiter, wrapped in his melancholy, appeared not to notice the question, since he made no sign; but upon his return, with articles for the table, he

presented a folded sheet to Cay, with the cold statement :

" 'Tis but a week old ; but, sir, in my opinion, a very silly paper without one dram of wit."

" Then I perceive, waiter, you can read," said Cay.

" Sir, I do far more than read. I am an author, sir. I have lately wrote a Treatise on Mineral Waters, which I believe will be found a learned and valuable production, when I have the opportunity to present it to the booksellers."

" I believe you will get more money by serving wine," said Cay.

" 'Tis very likely, sir. Are you a Grubæna, sir ? "

" I do not understand your question."

" Then I know you are not one of us. We authors, sir, are wont to call ourselves Grubænas, which signifies a dweller in mean places ; and when well received by the public, we are apt to designate to ourselves the lustrous title of Parnassian. Sir, I have a plain and mean exterior appearance," continued the unhappy waiter. " But could you look into me, the prospect would enlargen, and you would receive delightful entertainment. I trust, sir, I am not superfluous to this lady and yourself."

" We are both honoured by your confidence," said Cay.

" Then, sir, I shall certainly proceed. There is a set of books nowadays that I can't account for, nor yet see the use of them. I mean the Novels. I should not believe there could possibly exist such awkward, wrong-headed authors, if I had them not before my eyes. What do these people mean by translating the business of life into low and creeping prose ? But, sir, there's another thing which calls for animadversion ; 'tis the publishing of these common Maggies, full of lewd stuff and dirty personalities."

" You refer to the Magazines ? "

" I do indeed, sir. But what frightens me most is

the street ballads and last confessions. The wings of Minerva are clipped, and her classical gown is fouled with mire. Authorship, sir, is in mighty bad plight at present."

"Is there not Mr. Addison?" inquired Cay.

"Mr. Addison, sir, has a very shabby wit. He writes ill—very ill. His *Spectator*—much prated of, sir—is no better than a common Maggy. But there is hope—great hope, sir—for literature." The waiter ducked his head to whisper. "Next week I go to London."

"That will be good news for the booksellers," said Cay.

"I believe, sir, I shall be given a flattering reception. I should be sorry to think I could disappoint the public," said the waiter, perceptibly warming. "Besides my Treatise upon Mineral Waters I have an excellent Droll entitled the Death of Cleopatra. I write, sir, with the greatest voracity and without the least vanity. I challenge my brother Grubænas to show a category equal to mine. They have all relied upon some single branch of science, as Divinity and Poetry; but I have scorned to confine my Pegasus. A perfect Cyclopædia may be collected from my genius. I have carried the mystery of rhyming to a dizzy height. And I hope to attain so vast an ascendancy over the public that they will turn to any subject by my advice and direction. Sir, I propose, when leisure affords, to do the History of the World in hexameters and pentameters. My extraordinary way of writing must gain the admiration of the public, as it has already aroused the enmity of authors; for one gentleman, here in Salisbury, who is pleased to regard himself a scribbler of verses, invited me to a tavern under pretence of reading his new lines; and there, sir, he put poison into my mineral water. This merely contributed to my health, as it proved to act as physic, and I was at the time much in need of an emetic.

Coming, sir, coming!" called the waiter, becoming again unhappy as he walked away.

Left again to themselves, Cay opened the soiled newspaper, and began to search for the advertisements, which were not numerous, reading aloud for the benefit of ignorant Ruth:

"A woman delivered of a child with two faces like Janus; and 'tis said by the superstitious to be an emblem of universal peace. A worthy soul, Jane Hooks of Hoxton, aged one hundred and twelve, has got a new set of teeth, which drove out the old stumps. In Scotland a minister of the kirk fined by his assembly for powdering his wig upon the Sabbath. Yesterday the Queen cupped and blooded for her swelling in face occasioned by violent cold. Tunbridge Wells more full than ever was known, and play higher than usual. To be let, a large warehouse in Bartholomew Close, very fit for bookselling or the storing of old lumber. Celestial Anodyne Tincture cures everything; no quack trifling thing, acting by stupefaction, but a friendly, balsamic, and subtle medicine."

Cay rose with a shout, then banged the newspaper on the table, his fist upon it, and stared at his sweetheart in somewhat frightened fashion.

"What is it, Harry?" she asked.

"Listen, my love!" said Cay. And he proceeded to read in a guarded voice:

"At Winterberry, near Salisbury in Wiltshire, young ladies are boarded, and taught the various arts of deportment, also writing and arithmetic after an easy and peculiar manner, by Eliza Cay."

"Who is Eliza Cay?" cried Ruth.

"This means, sweetheart, that my old uncle is now a married man!"

CHAPTER II

A FOOLISH OLD GENTLEMAN ENTERTAINS TWO DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

WINTERBERRY parish stretched across the downs, its church upon the highest point, its manor-house upon the lowest. It was surrounded by roads, which seemed to have been made for pedestrians and purposes of agriculture ; for no public coach came within five miles of the village, which remains to this day one of the loneliest places in the land. Uncle Cay had a very pretty property and well-wooded. Much time was spent in chopping at the wood ; an occupation which kept him in health and the hearth in fuel. He looked a ferocious old gentleman, as he stood upon the lawn, with stiff gauntlets and chopper, a black cap upon his pate, for his only decent periwig was not to be risked in the shrubbery, and besides it put him into a mighty sweat upon a summer's day ; his stockings a mass of ripples, and his small-clothes unfastened at the knee. He was not respectable in appearance ; but then it was foolish to play the buck in Winterberry, where there were few eyes to admire, and not a tongue to flatter.

Great trifles occupied his days. That morning it was a matter for deliberation whether a long branch of sycamore, the twigs of which raked the window of his bedroom, should be trimmed, cut back, or lopped off at the trunk. Should the knife prune, the chopper hack, or the saw amputate ? Uncle Cay was vexed by the threefold head of this portentous question. The removal of the outer twigs would ensure more peaceful

nights ; the cutting back of the branch would admit more light ; while the lopping at the trunk might throw open a more extensive vista. But here Uncle Cay paused to put the supplementary question—would the vista be assured ? It was by no means certain, for while the branch remained in umbrageous possession of the window, no powers of the human imagination could foresee precisely what view would be opened by its fall ; while once removed it could never be restored should the result be disappointing. So Uncle Cay placed gloves, knife, chopper, and saw upon the turf ; then trotted off to his bedroom window that he might again inspect the obstructive branch from that point of vantage. His trifling labour was not to be laughed at, for a century later grave and learned gentlemen of Winterberry were vexed in soul by precisely identical problems.

In the ordinary course of things a full hour would have been employed in estimating the amount of space occupied by the bough, what daylight it displaced, what air it excluded, with a hundred lesser details, more particularly concerning other trees in the immediate background ; but the speculations of Uncle Cay were brought to nought presently by the most astonishing apparition of a young lady, who appeared at the shrubbery turning, and tripped towards the door, bringing amazement to the mind of Uncle Cay and reprieve to the branch of sycamore.

"A maiden alone ! And a woundy pretty one," muttered the old gentleman, whose eyes were well enough. Then he ran to the head of the stairs and called excitedly :

"Eliza ! Our first pupil is about to sound the knocker. And, by heaven, she will do !"

An elderly woman came to the foot of the stairs, pulling off an apron, and attempting to wipe her hands with it at the same time.

"I saw her from the kitchen——"

"There goes the door!" cried Uncle Cay.

"The young lady cannot be a pupil, for 'tis not likely she would come alone, on foot, and bring no luggage."

"A letter may have miscarried—or it may be she has travelled faster than the mail. A chaise may be waiting at the gate. Remember what I taught you, Eliza! Show her the scheme for the classes which I wrote out. And use her with great tenderness, Eliza."

Uncle Cay was unbuttoning as he spoke, standing in a position of perfect privacy; and, while Eliza made for the door, he ran to the press for his pedagogic garments; rejoiced to discover the wig upon its block in fairly good curl; listening his hardest, and chuckling in vast content, when a fresh young voice could be heard distinctly asking, "Is not this the Academy of Eliza Cay?"

"It is, young lady," replied the woman. "Will you step inside and be seated? And may I bring you a glass of gooseberry or of cowslip wine?"

"Port wine, you fool! Port for pretty pupils!" muttered Uncle Cay, while he struggled into a clean shirt.

"No, I thank you," replied Ruth. "Will you inform Mrs. Cay I wait upon her?"

"I am the lady you wish to see," came the answer; and Uncle Cay swore, because he knew that the subsequent silence implied an awkward interval.

"I should be glad to know upon what terms young ladies are admitted to your Academy," continued Ruth somewhat pertly.

"I will bring you the paper," said Eliza.

"Prospectus, blockhead!" groaned Uncle Cay, while he fastened his neckband.

"I perceive young ladies are here taught to dance, to use the fan, and to flirt the handkerchief," said Ruth.

"Very genteel accomplishments, young lady."

"Also writing in an elegantly sloping hand, and arithmetic after an easy method."

"Very useful occupations, young lady."

"No fees are mentioned."

"That matter can be arranged," said Eliza pleasantly.

"Are there many pupils?"

"None at the present time. You are the first."

"The zany! She will spoil all. Why was I not dressed for this occasion?" gasped Uncle Cay, as he drew on white stockings, then searched in vain for his silver-buckled shoes.

"Does not Mr. Cay dwell here?" inquired Ruth, feeling that information was reaching her in patches.

"He is engaged in his studies, young lady, and must not be disturbed until I hear his door open. He is a very learned gentleman and most kindly."

"The gentleman who is my guardian waits outside," said Ruth, prevaricating with a blush; for Cay stood a full mile from the house, although it was true he acted as her guardian. "You must know, Mrs. Cay, I am an orphan, and a young lady of fortune, but my education has been so much neglected that I do not even know my letters."

"This is mighty fine!" said Uncle Cay, as he withdrew his head from the passage, to powder his wig and scent his handkerchief. "A young lady of fortune, egad! An orphan, egad! Cannot tell her letters! Zounds, but I'll teach her!"

"That was the master's door, I believe," said Eliza.

"Ay, I hear him coming. Mr. Cay, here is a young lady who desires to become a pupil."

"Why was I not informed of this honour?" demanded the old gentleman in great severity of tone, mincing downstairs, shaking his lace ruffles, holding a perfumed handkerchief between finger and thumb. "Young lady, your most obedient servant."

Ruth smiled in her best fashion, rose and curtsied to Uncle Cay, who turned in his toes and capered to her side with the utmost alacrity; while she resumed her seat, conscious of dusty shoes, and murmured her apologies for arriving in this unexpected fashion.

"My guardian and I have come a long journey," she explained.

"And you are now exceeding weary," cried Uncle Cay, with more admiration than was needful. "Eliza, a glass of port wine for the illustrious pupil."

"I thank you, but I drink no wine," said Ruth. "We saw your advertisement by chance, sir, in the *Morning Advertiser*; and as my education has been much neglected——"

"We discuss no business till you are rested," interrupted Uncle Cay. "Eliza, tell the maid to prepare a chamber—the best—for this distinguished pupil. And Eliza! let us have early dinner—and a capon roasted. And Eliza! open the packet of Bohea which I brought from Salisbury. My dear young lady, oblige me by making use of this gilt foot-stool."

"But, sir, you have not listened to me," cried Ruth in some dismay. "Indeed, I am not weary, as we lay last night at Salisbury, and this morning have but ridden from the city. My guardian waits outside. You will surely wonder why he has not entered with me."

"I do assure you, dear young lady, all the curiosity within me is strained to breaking-point," declared Uncle Cay.

"I have a confession to make, sir."

"Why do you stay, Eliza?" asked Uncle Cay. "I have given my orders—the best chamber to be prepared, a capon to be roasted, the Bohea for this young lady—and rum-punch for myself," added the disgraceful pedagogue.

"Does Mrs. Cay teach?" inquired Ruth in a

wondering voice, when the obviously unlearned woman had departed.

"My priceless pupil!" cried the old gentleman with tremendous vigour. "The good lady manages, she caters, she plays the sacred part of chaperon. In the schoolroom she is but a looker-on. She sits with her sewing as it might be there, while I stand with my book as it might be here; for I am the teacher, beauteous pupil. 'Tis I that rear the tender feet to minuets, and show pink fingers how to shoot the fan. Nor am I neglectful of such minor accomplishments as writing and arithmetic; having indeed invented an easy fashion for the acquiring of both these arts. Yet 'tis in the more genteel accomplishments I pride myself."

"Are you not desirous, sir, to hear my confession?" asked Ruth, somewhat bewildered by this capering little pedagogue.

"First of pupils—the best!" cried Uncle Cay. "I am upon hot coals of expectancy all this while."

"Well, sir," said Ruth, flushing in the prettiest fashion, "my guardian is your nephew."

"Zounds! My rogue of a nephew, Job!"

"The same, sir. But he is better known to me as Mr. Harry."

"That young scoundrel guardian of a young lady of fortune, of great—nay, of surpassing, beauty! Why, he must be a fine gentleman! He has shot up in the world. My lovely pupil! I am your master, and I am at once to teach your ignorance how dangerous it is to be associated with a scamp."

"I find your nephew a gentleman. He is much improved since you parted from him," said Ruth with dignity.

"Maybe! Maybe! I knew there was gentility in Job. But he is a sad dog, my dear pupil. Would go after wenches, and talk me down at my own table. Your guardian! Why, the dog must have his pockets full of money."

"You must know I am an orphan, Mr. Cay, and have no knowledge of my parents. I am not now disposed to tell you by what strange chance your nephew became my guardian. Let me say he has been faithful to me, while my confidence in him is unbounded. I believe he was once somewhat loose in his character ; but he has now come right."

"I shall watch your interests, I promise you," said the old man heartily.

"I am most willing to place myself under your charge," said Ruth respectfully. "But, sir, I may not remain in this house without my guardian's consent."

"A fig for Job's consent ! Why, he must have given it already since he brought you here."

"And without his presence, sir."

"Zounds ! Dost mean, young lady, you require Job to come into my house, and eat at my table—and run after my pupils—and drink my wine ? Nay, I shall never consent to that."

"I go then to my guardian," said Ruth, rising, "and inform him we are not to receive a welcome."

"We !" cried Uncle Cay. "Be seated, fair pupil, and receive your first lesson in etymology and syntax. We—plural of I. Example, you, I, and others. I—nominative case, singular, Latin ego. Example, I stay. He—masculine pronoun of the third person. Example, he goes. Illustrated also by the homely proverb, 'Two's company, three's none.'"

"I thank you, sir, although you teach me nothing," Ruth replied. "With my guardian I stay, without him I go. I bring a message from your nephew. He desires to be reconciled with his only living relative, and he begs your acceptance of a very handsome horse."

"Job is my own flesh and blood, you see ; and for my part I always professed friendship for him," said Uncle Cay. "Is it a colt or filly, my dear ? What

breeding has it ? I'll find that out by the make of his pastern. He may have got some knowledge in the mysteries of the turf. He may be of consequence in the racing world. I'll do something for him. Say no more, my pretty pupil ; no more words to this matter. I'll do for him ; I'll invite him to my house. Bring him to me and I'll give him a hearty welcome, od-zookers I will, for your sake. Eliza ! let the maid prepare two bedrooms. My nephew has returned. He may be an Arabian barb for all I know. He shall have the best stall in the stable. I told you, Eliza, he would make a fine gentleman one of these days, and return to Winterberry with a fortune."

Ruth slipped towards the door ; but the old gentleman was by no means ready to see her go and followed protesting his willingness to make the journey himself. This Ruth would not allow and, drawing herself free from the ardent pedagogue, she hurried to a chalk-pit beyond the village where Harry had engaged to wait for her.

"The old rascal plays at some game. This scheme of his is nothing but a trick, but it comes mighty handy to our purpose. He shall teach you, while I superintend his stables, until your diamonds are sold ; and then we marry in Winterberry church and drive off to happiness."

So spake Harry, but Ruth had some conscientious scruples which she expressed by the question, "Are we not deceiving the old gentleman ?"

"We must do so," Cay answered. "For mind you, sweetheart, if the old rogue thought we had no money he would set the dogs on us. What manner of a woman is my aunt ?"

"She is dull and gross. She must be near sixty years of age. I was much taken aback when she told me her name ; for I had supposed she was the cook."

"I tell ye again, sweetheart, the old fox plays some game. The baggage is never his wife. He was one of

your hard-skinned old bachelors when I left him ; and to speak the truth I found him blind to women ; though it was said he ogled the wenches from his pew in church. Yet a man may do that as a harmless recreation."

" Harry, I must have a name," she whispered.

" I had thought of that. I shall call you Miss Just," he answered.

They mounted the horse, which had served them so well, and rode through the deserted village—for men and women were at work in the fields—to the gate of the manor. Immediately Uncle Cay came running along the carriage sweep, shouting in vast excitement :

" Zounds, he's a good 'un ! I can see that by the way he moves. Got by a racer, I warrant. Will win a plate at Newmarket. Let me see his teeth—open your mouth, my beauty. Thunder, he's four years old ! Can carry weight—will win a handicap. Give me your hand, Job. I thought you had grown a gentleman and forgot us all."

" I am sorry, sir, for the way I abused your kindness. I trust to please you better in the future," said the nephew bluntly.

" You have been a sad dog, Job. As you are my own flesh and blood, do ye see, I'll say no more about it. You bring me a fine horse and a fair pupil. Where is your luggage ? "

" Here," said Ruth, pointing to the pack, which the kindness of Lady Just had provided for her.

" A small bundle, egad, for a young lady of quality," said Uncle Cay suspiciously.

" I have less, and must seek from you an introduction to the best tailor in Salisbury. This young lady and I have been most unfortunately robbed of all that we possessed," declared Harry, bringing a flush to his young lady's face.

" Eh ! " cried Uncle Cay. " All that you possessed."

" We have but ten guineas between us as we stand.

We are fleeced, uncle, and to speak plainly we did well to escape with our lives."

"A pretty business," muttered the old gentleman. "I must have a word with you in private, Job. Young lady, oblige me by entering the house, and making yourself at home. Lead the horse to the stable, Job."

"I believe you are married, uncle," said the young man, immediately Ruth had turned her back upon them.

"Married, you rogue!" cried Uncle Cay.

"Eliza Cay here instructs young ladies——"

"Fudge! Thou art a fool," said the old man testily. "Hast forgotten old Liz, my housekeeper? A gentleman does not open an Academy for young ladies, therefore I put the business in the name of Eliza Cay, and would let it be thought by parents she is my wife."

"What is your purpose, uncle, in opening this Academy?"

"I'll hear no more questions. You shall know soon enough, and 'twill be when I learn something more of this young lady and yourself."

This important conversation did not take place at once, as Uncle Cay was kept well occupied in trying the paces of the horse, and satisfied by attempting to draw up its pedigree; over the wine he talked of little else, and appeared to avoid the subject of Ruth, whom he pestered with his attentions as master: one hour of dancing, another of reading, the next of flirting, although the old fellow did not know the steps of the minuet and himself required a spelling-master; but concerning the arts of flirtation he possessed some knowledge. However, Ruth did not much understand his by-play with handkerchief and snuff-box, and proved an ill pupil when invited to respond to his various acts of gallantry.

Uncle Cay was aroused to speak by three incidents. The greatest of these was the rebellion of Ruth, who intimated with the utmost plainness that she regarded

dancing as a profane pastime, and further declined to attend the parish church on Sunday. The second was a request from Harry for an introduction to the best tailor in Salisbury. While the third was a windy night which kept the twigs of the offending branch raking his window in perpetual discord.

Upon the Monday morning Harry borrowed his own horse to journey into town, and Ruth insisted upon going with him as far as the chalk-pit ; contrary to the instructions of the pedagogue, who waited to give her a lesson in words of one syllable. The young man was carrying to the post a letter, which he had written the previous day, giving Sir Thomas Just their address, and pressing him to turn the diamond necklace into cash as soon as possible, and appoint a meeting-place for the handing over of the money. They also required a small sum in advance.

"The sooner we are out of Winterberry the better," said Ruth. "I did not like to hear you call your uncle an old scoundrel, but I believe now you judged him fairly. He has taught himself a very unpleasant trick of ogling. And as for teaching me to read and write—why, my dear Harry, he finds more interest in my ankles than my brains."

"The old fellow has reached his second youth," said Harry. "He understands he wasted his first, and has a very shrewd idea he will not be allowed a third. When I return there may be, I fear, something of a storm ; for after breakfast he drew me aside, and said he had a few questions to put to me this evening."

"He has asked me several about my parents, but chiefly concerning my fortune. I would not answer him."

"He grows suspicious, but I shall settle him."

"With the truth, Harry. No more lies, I beg of you. Let us speak the truth if we are to be turned out upon the plain for it."

"Leave it to me, love," said Cay. "We are to get through the world as best we can," he added darkly.

Ruth returned to the manor, and was there instructed to occupy the hour of study in skipping and jumping, to increase her agility and grace; the pedagogue leaping before her as a model and an example to be avoided, for his knees were stiff, but Ruth soon declined to exhibit her grace and ankles, demanding instead a lesson in caligraphy, which was granted with reluctance and bad spelling.

During the afternoon she escaped and walked in the country; while Uncle Cay, after an ineffectual search for his pupil, lost his temper, seized an axe, and removed the offending branch of sycamore by the radical method of felling the tree—and was ever afterwards afforded from his bedroom window an uninterrupted prospect of his row of pigsties.

Harry returned during early evening, and discovered his faithful sweetheart waiting near the chalk-pit. He appeared somewhat ill at ease, but when Ruth sought to know the cause he laughed and swore it was nothing.

"The tailor's assistant—a rogue inclined to be insolent—appeared to recognise me. He asked me a few questions concerning my previous tailor, which I did not choose to answer. I thought maybe he had seen me when I dwelt formerly with my uncle, but he declared he had not been long in Salisbury."

"Had you seen him before, Harry?" asked Ruth.

"Never, sweetheart. I have a memory for faces, and had the fellow ever passed by me on the road I should not have forgot his ugly features."

"I trust no ill wind is blowing," she murmured.

"'Tis nothing, little one. The rascal saw I was shabby, and thought he might try his insolence upon a broken gentleman. I go next week to have my new coat fitted, and if he tries to play this game a second time I call the master."

"When does Sir Thomas receive our letter?"

" Upon the third day from now, if the mail do not miscarry. We may receive an answer about the time I go to have my coat fitted. How has the day gone, Ruthie ? "

" In foolery," she answered.

After a good dinner, when Ruth had retired to wander in the garden, Uncle Cay, who was well into the second bottle, opened business with the observation :

" Wild courses will never do, Job. I don't begrudge a young fellow his fling, but why must he always pay so confounded dear for it ? I make allowances—we are all flesh and blood—but at your age I had as much prudence as I possess now. I would cut as pretty a figure with the ladies as any young dog of to-day, and without any of his expense. I made every wench a compliment, but look ye, Job, I never gave a present for a kiss. And now I am as young in flesh and blood as ever I was."

" Very true, sir," said the nephew respectfully.

" A fine maid, egad ! What fortune has she, Job ? How came you to be appointed her guardian ? Has she no relations ? I would hear the complete history of her family."

" That is more than I can tell you, sir."

" You trifle with me, Job. I will hear the true state of affairs before I finish this bottle, or I shall suspect the pair of ye to be little better than vagabonds."

" 'Tis a story you may find hard to believe—a very remarkable story, sir, I do assure you. As I have already told you, Miss Just is a young lady of great fortune."

" What is the amount ? " asked Uncle Cay.

" To tell the truth, sir, I hardly know myself, but her jewels alone are valued at twenty thousand pounds," said the young man recklessly.

" Have you documentary evidence ? " cried the old gentleman.

" You have my word, sir."

" Your word, sir ! That is not evidence. In this matter we must have legal proof."

" Next week Mrs. Ruth will be receiving a letter from Sir Thomas Just regarding the sale of a portion of her jewels. I undertake that you shall see this letter."

" This Sir Thomas Just is then a relation. How is it, sir, he was not appointed guardian in the place of you—a stranger ? "

" Sir, that is part of my adventure."

" Tell me the whole of this adventure."

" I believe Sir Thomas is very distantly connected," said the unhappy nephew. " He is a great gentleman, while Mrs. Ruth's unfortunate father had lowered himself by trading. He made a great fortune by growing the tobacco-plant."

" Well, sir," cried Uncle Cay, " why should he not have grown the tobacco-plant ? How should we smoke, sir, or enjoy our pinch, if worthy merchants did not grow the weed, and ship it to us in England ? "

" Very true, sir, but 'tis not the occupation of a gentleman."

" I would as lief enjoy a fortune made out of tobacco as any other. There is nothing dishonourable in the growing of tobacco, or the shipping of tobacco, or the smoking of tobacco," cried Uncle Cay, pounding the mahogany with excited fists. " But your adventure, as you are pleased to call it, had nothing of tobacco in it, I believe, except the smoke. You are a rogue for trifling, Job."

" I shall be plain with you, sir, and I shall also be brief," said the harassed nephew. " After the unhappy dissension, which caused me to leave you, I found myself thrown upon my resources, and for a time wandered through the country, endeavouring to obtain an honest living by offering various commodities for sale ; such as chemical washballs for beautifying the skin, and blistering-plasters of my own invention.

I came after a while to Cornwall, and while going through the villages of the northern coast a great storm blew one night—for it was winter—and many vessels were destroyed upon the rocks, towards which they had been partly drawn by the flares of the wreckers. So I went to the beach in the hope of rendering some assistance, and by chance a raft was flung ashore, and lashed to it were two ladies—mother and daughter—the father having unfortunately been washed away."

"Was there any witness?" asked Uncle Cay.

"No, sir. I stood alone, and the night was very dark. I drew the ladies into a place of safety, and then perceived that the mother was on the point of death. With her last breath, sir, she implored me to act as guardian to her daughter, and with her last action pointed to a bag which was fastened securely to her. This contained the jewels, title-deeds of the father's property, and his will appointing his daughter and only child sole heiress."

"Was there no executor, Job?"

"The mother was sole executor, sir."

"A very notable adventure, Job."

"A very wonderful adventure, sir."

"Where are these papers?"

"In the charge, sir, of Mr. Jacob Grambla, a clever and noted attorney of the church-town of Moyle, in the county of Cornwall."

"You have no fortune, Job?"

"I have nothing, sir, save what Miss Just allows me."

"You respect your uncle, I hope, Job?"

"With all my heart, sir."

"Then we will have another bottle."

This was partly consumed before Uncle Cay spoke again:

"A very wonderful story, Job, and an amazing pretty maid. I trust her title to the fortune is not disputed?"

"Sir, there is neither man nor woman who is able to dispute it."

"And it is undoubtedly a large fortune?"

"A very large fortune, sir."

"And this Mr. Jacob Grambla proves a worthy attorney?"

"A liberal and open-handed gentleman, sir."

"You have wondered, Job, at my plan for opening an Academy to receive young ladies?"

"When I saw your advertisement, sir, I could hardly believe my eyes."

"I will be plain with you, Job, and brief as you were with me. I have a great fondness for you, Job."

"I am much obliged to you, sir."

"We are flesh and blood, therefore we shall rely on one another. I wasted my youth, and idled away my manhood. Now I would begin again. I would enter into wedlock, Job. I conceived this idea of an Academy under the management of worthy old Liz, might bring into my house young ladies—they are few indeed in this neighbourhood, and such as there are do not show a proper respect for me—and such young ladies I might consider with an attentive eye, which would consider firstly youth, secondly beauty, thirdly fortune; for you must know, Job, I am not avaricious of this world's goods. It was a mighty fine idea I think, Job."

"A very happy idea, sir."

"I believe it was an inspiration, Job. Was it not a strange thing that your eyes should have fallen upon the advertisement; and that my first pupil should have been Mrs. Ruth who, I take it, Job, possesses youth, beauty, and fortune, in very excellent proportions?"

"It was indeed, sir, a remarkable coincidence."

"It was providential, sir. We will have another bottle, Job. I love and esteem you, nephew. I propose to relieve you of all duties, yet I undertake you shall not lose. I shall make provision for you,

Job. You shall receive from me an income of two hundred pounds."

" Upon conditions, sir ? "

" Nay, I impose no conditions. You shall live where you like, and how you please. You did well for all of us when you brought this young lady to my house. You have become reconciled to your own flesh and blood, which is a happy thing. You have obtained a sure income for life, which is also a happy thing. And you have introduced your ward to as gallant an old fellow as may be found in this county of Wiltshire ; which I believe is the happiest thing of all. For I have the honour to inform you, Job, that I am determined to make Mistress Ruth my very worthy lady—and I propose to lose no time about it."

CHAPTER III

A VERY CURIOUS FORM OF HOSPITALITY

FROM that hour Uncle Cay displayed a singular selfishness with regard to Ruth. Upon one of the rare opportunities when guardian and ward were able to enjoy each other's company, they escaped upon the downs and discussed their distressing comedy; which required only negligence on the part of Sir Thomas to promise a dark ending. For Uncle Cay pressed his suit with the impatience of age and the ardour of youth. There was an end to reading, writing, and arithmetic; but exercises in the arts of love went on from morn to eve.

"All this comes of not speaking the truth," said Ruth, far too unhappy to talk severely. "We longed to find shelter in Winterberry, and have but run ourselves into a trap, from which only Sir Thomas can set us free. Had we revealed the fact that we are lovers——"

"We should never have passed the rascal's threshold," finished Harry. "No more words about the truth, sweetheart. It will not do for the world. I shall never again wear a mask, I swear; but if I am to win honesty by sticking to the truth, then I am done for. Do we not lie in our own defence? That surely is no sin; for even the criminal is urged to plead not guilty."

"I do not lie."

"You have made the old rogue believe you are a lady of fortune."

"And so I am."

"You suffer him to address you as Miss Just."

"I wish he would! He calls me lamb, dove, kitten,

duckling ; I am become a menagerie of birds and beasts. You forced the name of Just upon me, and I accepted it, having none of my own. I do not lie, Harry—and you are cruel.”

“Nay, sweetheart, let us not quarrel with all the world against us. Tell me the latest threat of the old reprobate.”

“If I do not speedily consent, he will close his door against you. I believe, Harry, I did wrong in leaving Moyle, and am now being punished for it.”

“Two days from now,” said the young man hopefully, “we should receive a letter from Sir Thomas. Should he send the advance for which we asked, I shall get my horse out of the stable in the middle of the night ; then we ride to some place of safety. Upon returning to the manor, sweetheart, smile upon the old fool—I wish he were nothing worse—and encourage him.”

“That I cannot do.”

“At least do not repulse him ; lest in a fit of anger he should turn us out, deny me my own horse, and leave us to go on foot ; and we cannot go until we receive an answer from Sir Thomas. Play with the scoundrel, little one ; promise him a final answer this day sen- night ; but, I pray you, dangle a little hope before him.”

“If he must live upon the hope I give him, he is like to starve. But I shall do my best, Harry. I cannot undo your lies, but I shall tell him a young maid does not consign herself to the affection of a grandfather until she has searched her heart for at least a week. Is it not strange, Harry, that he does not suspect you are in love with me ? ”

“You must know, Ruthie, my uncle is a justice of the peace ; therefore he knows nothing of the law. He believes a guardian is not permitted to marry his ward ; and 'tis none of my business to set him straight.”

It was certain that Uncle Cay suspected some plot ;

for he went into a passion when Ruth begged for time, and reminded her, in a sentence not his own, that love brooked no delay. He loved her entirely, and it was hardly possible to suppose she would refuse the name of a gentleman of some importance in the county ; at which Ruth smiled and was tempted to confess she was not unwilling to accept the name. Warmed by her smile, the old fellow went upon his knees, bowed his head before her, and made himself absurd ; while Ruth, with a view before her of a monstrous periwig, well curled and powdered, merely sighed and wished herself leagues away. Encouraged by the sigh, Uncle Cay looked up and desired to know whether he had not heard an expression of devotion. Ruth prevaricated and still required her seven days' freedom.

"I doubt, Harry," said the old gentleman over the wine, "you are not so zealous as you might be in forwarding my suit."

"Have no fear, sir," replied the nephew. "Ruth likes you very well ; and I am sure she has set her heart upon becoming Mrs. Cay. But you must humour her whim, if you would win her. Sir, had you ever gone angling, you would know that a trout will refuse your most cunning bait during six days ; but on the seventh it will rise and snap it. In the matter of coyness, maids and trouts have much in common."

"Coyness is a mighty pretty thing," Uncle Cay admitted. "But, look ye, Harry, a maid may show too much of it. Mistress Ruth should have passed through the stage of coyness by now. 'Tis her time to snap ; and, by thunder, she does not snap. If she dallies, she may lose me, Harry."

"I shall warn her, sir."

"Egad, I'll do that myself. She may find herself without a husband ; for she is twenty-two, look you ; she is not young. I would rescue her from a solitary existence—and she asks for another week !" cried the old gentleman, hurrying off to find the peccant damsel ;

who, when discovered, would not be shaken from her purpose.

The day arrived when Harry was due in Salisbury for the fitting of his coat ; and that morning Uncle Cay was in so sour a humour that he locked the stable door, clapped the key in his pocket, and refused the young man his horse. " The animal is mine, and I do not choose to lend him," he growled. So the young man had to walk, and as usual Ruth accompanied him to the chalk-pit ; but both of them felt uneasy, for the letter which was due had not arrived.

" I do not like to leave you, love. I fear my uncle may have some design against you," said Harry glumly.

" He can do nothing worse than declare his passion ; and that I am so well accustomed to hear, it teases me no more than the buzz of a fly. Yet I hope you will return quickly, Harry."

" I shall come by Giles the carrier, whose cart leaves Salisbury about the middle of the afternoon. The mail will have arrived before then, and may bring our letter."

" If anything should befall you or myself," faltered Ruth.

" What do you fear, little one ? No harm can befall me in this part of the country ; while my uncle has not the strength to force you into a post-chaise and carry you to Scotland. Yet I do not go, if you desire me to stay."

" Go, Harry," she said. " I shall not be easy in my mind until I see another coat upon you. I am troubled with foolish fancies—I had ill dreams last night. Let us appoint a place where—should we be separated—we may meet again."

The young man looked disturbed. He drew out his purse and divided the ten guineas, giving Ruth half, and saying, " If I should not return, Ruthie—which is most unlikely—or should my uncle force you away in my absence ; in either case escape from him, go to

the city of Bath, and stand each day at noon upon the bridge which crosses the Avon in the north parade. Now let me say farewell, dear love, and may God help us ! ”

Harry descended the long hill at a swinging gait ; while Ruth, after standing to admire his ease and strength, returned to the manor, and there submitted herself to much hand-stroking, for during her absence Uncle Cay had fretted himself into a better humour. But when the time came for her to set out towards the chalk-pit, her ancient lover asserted his authority and declared she should not go.

“ I discover too much friendship between you and my nephew. Did I not know that the law forbids a guardian to marry his ward—which is a very wise piece of legislation—I should suppose you had set your cap at the young rascal,” he said.

“ As we cannot marry, sir, there is no good reason why I should not go out to meet him,” she answered.

“ I do not wish it to be put about this village that my wife preferred the nephew, though she had the good sense to take the uncle.”

“ I have not taken you.”

“ Do so, most beautiful of black-eyed damsels ! Utter the word, my precious gipsy ! Then you shall go forth to welcome the scapegrace—ay, and you shall receive my permission to flirt your handkerchief at him for this one evening.”

“ I give my answer, sir, upon the day I choose—and upon the last moment of that day,” she said incautiously.

“ Hey ! What is this ? The last moment ! ” cried the old gentleman. “ I tell thee, Ruth, I will not be played with. I am no tyrant——”

“ Then let me pass, sir.”

“ Nay, I am a quiet old fellow ; but I love thee, Ruth—ay, I am smitten from head to foot. And, by thunder, I will marry you.”

"Do you not perceive, sir, you are interfering with my liberty?" she cried.

"No more coos, my dove! No more bleats, my lamb! No more mews, my kitten! I have all the keys in my pocket. You do not go out."

"Then, sir, will you leave me?"

"Nay, pretty one. I fear you might leap from the window and do yourself an injury. Be seated, my little giantess. I would run my fingers through your hair—for I find that mighty soothing—and I would toy with this wonderful piece of nature which admits to your brain my words of adoration. Maybe I shall coax a most emphatic yes before our rascal comes."

It seemed only a matter of a few minutes, so Ruth became resigned; but with her thoughts far away and her mind upon the chalky road. Time passed slowly in that torture-chamber, yet she felt assured Harry was long in coming. With Uncle Cay's fingers in her ears it was difficult to distinguish sounds from outside. Therefore she started when old Eliza entered to remark, "The carrier waits below. He brings an urgent message."

"Where is Harry?" cried Ruth.

She looked round and found herself alone. Eliza had gone to hear the message, while Uncle Cay was running to the hall. She dared not follow; besides she could not. A fearful muttering of voices went on; that was the carrier, rough and surly; while Uncle Cay cursed and swore; and Eliza appeared to be hissing like a serpent. It was getting darker, and Ruth knew that she was fainting; and some awful thing had happened.

The front door banged with a shock that shook the windows; while the master of the house was raving and cursing his way towards her: "A scoundrel! A dog! A devil! And my nephew! My own flesh and blood, the only son of my only brother who, though a fool who could never get money, was as proper a gentleman as ever walked on shoe-leather. A common thief,

a cutpurse, a footpad ! I must change my name, resign the commission, and sell my property. I am disgraced in the county. I am now the scorn of the entire neighbourhood. Let him hang, I say ! Let them hang him high ! I would not cut him down for a thousand pounds. Hey, mistress ! ” shouted the old gentleman, reeling into the room. “ You know something of this. You have been with your precious guardian long enough to know how he got his living. But they have him—ay, they have him fast. He was taken in Salisbury to-day, and is to be brought before the justices at their next meeting. A rascal, I say—ay, a pair of rascals, for I doubt you are no better. This gown, young woman—’tis too fine for the wench of a footpad. ’Tis stolen, I warrant. A young lady of fortune ! A mighty pretty story, but it won’t do, my dear. Marry you ! Not now, my wench, not now—but I’ll give ye board and lodging. Ay, you shall get your meat as you got the clothes you lie in.”

But Ruth heard not a word, for she had fainted ; and this was the best thing that could have happened during the old gentleman’s hour of anarchy.

Uncle Cay was selfish and hot-tempered, but he had a sense of honour. He spoke like a scoundrel in his rage, yet with no intention of behaving as one. An old fool, who knew he was foolish, and believed the young people were common adventurers who had made a game of him, was to be excused for a loss of self-control at the moment when the news was brought that his name had been disgraced by his nephew, who was now found to be no better than a robber. By the time Ruth had revived, he too was restored to a more equable frame of mind.

“ Giles is a worthy fellow, but apt to exaggerate,” he said to the horrified Eliza. “ I believe a mistake has been made. Mr. Job is a Cay and a gentleman. Pressed by poverty, he may have purchased a second-hand coat. He may even have forgot to pay for it. So

he is taken into execution to satisfy the debt—and to owe money, Eliza, is not dishonourable in a gentleman."

But later in the evening another messenger arrived, in the shape of a neighbouring farmer; and he declared that the story of Giles the carrier was not exaggerated. Then Uncle Cay locked himself into the dining-room with a dozen of claret, and drank till midnight; nor was he so far gone by then that he could not hear a timid knock upon the door.

Ruth stood upon the threshold fully dressed; her hair upon her shoulders and her face much disfigured by weeping. Uncle Cay drew her in, forced her into a chair, and placed a glass of wine before her; but the girl only moaned and shivered until the bemused old gentleman went upon his knees and kissed her hands.

"I am sorry for the words I spoke, my precious," he stammered. "I believe you are a good maid—ay, an honest maid. That scoundrel is to blame for all."

"Tell me what has happened. I cannot sleep. I cannot lie down," she moaned.

"You know how the rascal has been living."

"Yes, I knew, and have scolded him for it. He has come right now."

"Too late, Ruth. They have him—and he will hang."

"He will not hang. He is safe from the rope unless they make it of silk. He is protected by St. Ludgvan's water. I shall go to Bath and find him on the bridge. I am to tell you the whole truth. But in pity let me hear what took place to-day."

"He has run his neck into the noose," said Uncle Cay unsteadily. "The tailor's assistant—who has lately arrived from London—recognised the coat our rascal was wearing, and indeed could not mistake it, having himself cut the cloth for a worthy gentleman who resides near Exeter. So he lodges an information; and to-day, when they know Job is to arrive in Salisbury, the constables await him in the tailor's shop."

Then he muttered to himself, "I shall keep the door of the stable locked, else I may lose the running horse he gave me."

Some minutes passed before Ruth could find her voice. At length she placed her hand in a friendly fashion upon the old man's sleeve, and began to whisper the whole true history of her life: how she had been cast up by the sea and adopted by Grambla; how Harry had come to her at Coinagehall; how she had been rendered homeless, and cared for by the Justs; and how she had fled with the young man who, she now confessed, was her accepted lover.

"I spoke the truth when I came here first," she concluded. "I am a nameless orphan who has never known her parents. And I am a young woman of fortune, for I possess a diamond necklet of great value."

"Very well," said the old gentleman, almost sobered by her narrative. "I suspected Job, but I never suspected you. Now he has gone, and you will hear no more of him. Guardian, indeed! A pretty story! I knew the rogue was lying. We are now to live down the disgrace and the dishonour he has brought upon us; and, I tell ye, Ruth, I cannot lead that life alone.

u loved a worthless rascal, and have lost him; and tis your greatest happiness to have lost him, for had u married the rogue he would have used ye ill."

"He would not, for I have reformed him."

"Now, child, you shall reform me. 'Tis an ill story, et it may lead us to some good. You have indeed ost the nephew, but what is that when you gain the uncle?"

"Do not tease me now," Ruth pleaded.

"I tease ye out of kindness," he declared.

"I shall wed no man if he be not Harry."

"He is dead, child."

"He will escape. They will find him innocent. I know not what will happen, save that the magic of the

water frees him. During hundreds of years it has never been known to fail."

"Nay, do not tell me about water. I know little of that. Job is damned by the coat he walked in. This fine gown, child—did he steal that too?"

"Nay, it was given me by Lady Just, and I cut it to suit my figure. I am an honest maid."

"'Tis one of your many virtues that I love. Tomorrow," said Uncle Cay, wobbling over the table as he sought to snuff the candles, "I visit the curate and bid him advertise the banns."

"Oh, sir, pity me! Remember I am alone and unprotected."

"You shall obtain protection and lose solitude. You shall win the name you value. I am honest with you, Ruth. Is it not in my power to force you to remain? Yet I propose to make you my lady. You might travel many miles before you had the fortune to discover a country squire with intentions so honourable as mine," declared the old gentleman with perfect truth.

"Harry will return," Ruth murmured. "And if not, I must go to him." But her head was swimming, so that she was forced to accept Uncle Cay's assistance to her room; and, his feet being uncertain, they both stumbled sadly up the stairs.

In the morning Ruth awoke to misery; also to the discovery that her clothes and her money had been removed, while the door was locked. Weak and ill she lay until Eliza came with breakfast, and the information that the master had gone out already upon a visit to the curate.

"Is there no letter arrived for me?" Ruth asked.

"Nay, my young lady, we get few letters here," said Eliza sourly.

"Pray bring my clothes, for I wish to rise," Ruth went on coldly.

"I'll see to that," replied Eliza.

Presently feet pattered along the passage and stopped

at Ruth's door. The key was turned, and Uncle Cay had the impudence to enter, with a chuckle of delight and the full-throated cry :

"Ruth, my love ! Good morning !"

"Leave my room ! Mr. Cay, sir, this is indeed vile treatment," cried the girl.

"Hey-ho, my little dove ! Why are ye so disturbed ? Why such a mighty fluttering of white plumage ? A pretty fuss to make ! May I not walk about my own house, enter my own chambers, and enjoy a little chat with the lady of my love ? I have visited the curate, sweet one. Upon Sunday he is to publish our banns for the first time."

"I care not if he publishes them twenty times," sobbed Ruth. "But I will never go to church with you."

"I believe you will, Ruth. Ay, I am very sure you will be happy to go," said Uncle Cay, who appeared in a holiday humour. "I shall give you the week ; I am bound in honour to give you the seven days. 'Tis true we are dishonoured by that scoundrel ; but we are not to be disgraced," he continued, capering about the room. "I find there is much sympathy expressed for me. 'Tis well known how I disowned Job, and turned him out with a guinea in his pocket ; and 'tis said I did all that an honest gentleman could do to protect the honour of his family. Ah, little one, suffer me to fold you in these arms."

"Go !" cried Ruth. "If you come within reach of me I shall strike you."

The old man's countenance changed at that and his hands began to tremble. He had not looked for so much spirit in a weak young maid.

"Ruth, my love, I would not be cruel with you," he said. "But maidens must be tamed, my dear. Little birds must have their wings clipped. I would not remind you every day that you are in my power."

"Cruel—cruel wretch !" she sobbed.

"I shall be wondrous kind when we are wedded. Ay, a doting old Jack, I promise ye. 'Twill then be your turn to plague my life out. Let's have no idle words, my jewel. Here you are, and here you shall remain, until you give me your oath to go upon my arm to church. I wish ye no evil, Ruth ; nay, I desire for ye all the good in the world. But I will marry ye. By thunder, I will marry ye."

"If you have any affection for me, or can feel pity for my misery, leave me," she implored ; and the persecutor departed with many grimaces and queer oaths of constancy.

So the day passed, with Ruth in tears and Uncle Cay in triumph ; since both foresaw the ending of that struggle. Even had the door been left open, the prisoner could not have escaped without her clothing. Being unable to write or read, she could not have sent for assistance to Sir Thomas ; nor would she have known what instructions he gave had the long expected letter been delivered. There was nothing to hinder the old gentleman of the manor from keeping her a prisoner until either her health, her reason, or her determination gave way.

After two days of this confinement Ruth decided to free herself by committing a mortal sin. It was now evident that the mail had miscarried, or that the letter intended for her had fallen into the hands of some rascal of the road ; for it was not possible to suppose that Sir Thomas could have failed her. The sin was perhaps no great one. She made the plan of winning her liberty by agreeing to marry Uncle Cay ; though at the first opportunity she intended to slip out of the house and to run all the way to Bath.

"I accept, not him, but my clothes and my five guineas," she assured herself.

Uncle Cay paid visits like a doctor during the course of every day ; and certainly he tried to make himself agreeable, and saw to it that the young lady was well

supplied with meat and drink. Early in the afternoon Ruth arrived at her decision ; and not long afterwards the old fellow capered along the passage and trotted into the room with the air of a young rake but without the grace of a dancing-master. He brought roses for his lady, and while forcing them tenderly upon her he was struck by a certain change in her appearance, and cried joyously : " My precious jewel I shall be astonished if you have not some kindly words for me."

" You are right," said Ruth in a low and frightened voice. " I think, sir, you have used me very ill, and I may not easily forgive you. But I pine for my liberty——"

" And so you marry me," cried the old man, interrupting her.

" I thank you for taking the words out of my mouth," said Ruth.

" My love and my life, let me embrace you," cried the amorous old gentleman.

" And now, sir," said poor Ruth, when that ordeal was over for the moment, " let my clothes be brought, and suffer me to leave this hateful room—and let there be some decency between us."

" Nay, my sweet love, the old lad must have his way a short while longer. Birds, my pretty, have a trick of flitting. On this window-sill one minute ; half the way to Bath the next. The dove in a cage is safe, my love. But the dove in a tree is her own sweet mistress. Be patient, my shining pearl. The marriage shall take place with all possible despatch. I shall ride to-morrow into Salisbury and procure a licence—ay, and would pay for it a hundred pounds with the utmost pleasure. You do not fly from this chamber, little dove. You do not leave it till you flit with me to church."

" Can you not trust me ? " cried Ruth ; but could say no more, for the knowledge of her intended wickedness choked her ; while the sense of her terrible

position, which now seemed doubly worse, crushed her last hope.

"Marriage is a sweet thing, love, but 'tis also a matter of business," said Uncle Cay excitedly. "I go for pen and paper; and to call good Liz. I shall draw up a contract of marriage, and we will put our hands to it."

"I cannot write," moaned Ruth.

"'Tis not needful, love. You shall set your pretty mark against the seal, and the worthy Liz shall witness it."

All was bustle the next few minutes. The gasping old gentleman sat to the table and began to scribble, while Eliza stood stiffly at his side; and Ruth lay white and silent on the bed. Birds were in song upon branches near the window. Winterberry was ever famous for its blackcaps.

"A contract of marriage between John Charles Cay, of the manor of Winterberry, in the county of Wiltshire, gentleman; and Ruth blank—nay, a name must go down. Let it be Ruth Just," chuckled the old fellow.

"Ruth of no name, and no parents, and no county—and no hope," whispered the pale girl. Then she started upon her elbow and gasped, "What is that?"

"A cart upon the road," said the sour Eliza, who feared that her reign was nearly over.

"Zounds, 'tis a visitor!" cried Uncle Cay suddenly, pushing the paper from him; then sitting up and listening.

"They are carriage wheels! They go swiftly."

"They are turning into the drive! They approach the door!" cried Ruth, who was staring wildly at the window which overlooked the garden side.

"We shall conclude this business later," said Uncle Cay frowning and uneasy; for this delay appeared to him a trifle ominous.

"Do not go!" Ruth exclaimed.

"Nay, my precious. I shall stay with you. Eliza, go to the door and receive my visitors."

"Do not leave me, dear Mr. Cay!" cried Ruth again; dreading lest he might depart and lock the door behind him.

"Some kind neighbour calls to sympathise. He shall stay to crack a bottle and congratulate us," said Uncle Cay.

His face was turned towards the door, so that he could not perceive Ruth sitting up, excited, alert, wide-eyed; listening for the sound of voices from below. They came: the voice of Eliza inviting; that of a man accepting. And the master of the house cried out; for he felt himself pushed violently, and was staring the next moment at an empty bed. Ruth had run. Along the passage she scampered, and down the stairs, upon bare feet, in ghostly nightdress, with hair streaming behind; and so to the hall, there to fling herself with sobs of joy and gratitude upon the matting to embrace the knees of that calm gentleman and great magician, Sir Thomas Just.

CHAPTER IV

RUTH CONTINUES HER TRAVELS

"O HORRID! this fellow comes to ruin me," cried Uncle Cay, as he stumbled down the stairs.

"I believe, sir, you are detaining^g this young lady against her will," said the guest. "My name is Sir Thomas Just; my English seat is in the county of Cornwall; and I have appointed myself the guardian of Miss Ruth."

"Another guardian! The pretty wretch is overdone with them," the old man muttered. "Sir, I am pleased to see you; I am honoured, sir," he continued. "I also am the self-appointed guardian of this lady. She has been the accomplice of a robber; and I am protecting her, sir, from the severity of the law. Besides, she has promised to become my wife."

"He forced consent from me," sobbed Ruth. "He has kept me locked up, and has stolen my clothes and money. He is himself worse than any highwayman."

"I shall waste no words with you, sir," said Sir Thomas. "Restore this young lady her property immediately."

"Have you a justice's warrant to search my house?" asked Uncle Cay, trying to bluster.

"I shall certainly procure a warrant; not to search the house, but to punish its master, should you press me. Now, child, return to your chamber and dress yourself," said Sir Thomas, leading Ruth towards the stairs.

"This young lady has promised to marry me. She has signed the contract."

"I have done no such thing," cried Ruth.

"But you would have done so had this gentleman not arrived. I have a right to claim you; I have sheltered you, and given you food, these ten days; and, by thunder, I claim you—ay, I will be paid. Oh, little bird, will ye never chirp again at poor old John Charles?"

"Have done with this foolery, sir," said Sir Thomas. "If this young lady stands in your debt, I will discharge what she owes. I say again, restore her garments, and let her clothe herself decently; for I am about to carry her away with me."

"The garments are destroyed; they were but stolen rubbish and moth-eaten."

"This is a lie, sir."

"I believe you, sir. Yes, sir, I know I am lying," said Uncle Cay feebly. "I locked the garments in a chest, and now have lost the key. This is another lie, sir. What more can a man do?"

Then he dropped into a chair, and began to rave concerning lost opportunities and doves with unclipped wings.

"My good woman," said Sir Thomas, addressing the housekeeper, "pray show this young lady where her property is hidden."

"Am I to obey the gentleman, sir?" asked Eliza, who was well pleased at the prospect of seeing Ruth quit the house.

"She will fly—with feathers or without. Oh, wench, wench!" raved the old gentleman. "Why do ye torment me? Why was I so sluggish in my youth?"

"Step into your room, young lady, and I will bring your garments," said Eliza pleasantly; and went on to herself as she bustled away, "If I have any more to do with this wenching business, may I be hanged for it. Master has forced me to use his name, has allowed me to pass as his wife. Now I shall ride in Master Giles his cart to Salisbury, and visit an attorney. If my

gentleman does not make me his lady, he shall pay me a sum in damages, I warrant."

Soon Ruth was dressed, and went with Sir Thomas to the chaise, passing through the hall without a word of farewell to the old gentleman, who sat huddled in a chair, weeping bitterly and beating his hands upon the table. The next minute they were whirled from the manor and along the village street towards the downs. In the sweet air of liberty Ruth again broke down, as she told her kind protector how Harry had been taken.

"This is an ill business. I fear me, child, you have wasted your love upon a scoundrel," said Sir Thomas gravely.

"He is become honest, sir. We travelled together, and he behaved like a gentleman—nay, far better than any gentleman save yourself. That wicked old man, from whom you have just rescued me, made my poor Harry a robber. My lover must not be punished for sins he has repented of; which God has forgiven him. Oh, sir, you will save my Harry!"

"My poor child, I cannot help him."

"You are great and powerful. Will you not obtain for him Her Majesty's most gracious free pardon?"

"A Catholic baronet, who is moreover scarce an Englishman by residence, must not go to Court and seek for favours," replied Sir Thomas. "We lie to-night at Salisbury, and I shall make inquiries about your lover. But, child, I cannot bid you hope, for there is much feeling against these gentry of the road, and 'tis indeed right they should be punished. This baptism of which you think so highly, my poor simple child, was but I fear a form of blasphemy."

"Oh, sir!" sobbed Ruth.

"The water of St. Ludgvan's well has no more power of magic than the rain from heaven."

"I have faith, sir; and perfect faith will surely work a miracle. I believe Harry cannot be hanged, except by a silken rope. God, sir, will not permit it."

"God, child, allows His creatures freedom of action. He does not restrain the man from robbing ; nor will He restrain the hangman from his duty."

"God did not restrain Mr. Cay from making me a prisoner ; yet He sent you to deliver me."

"Ah, child ! I perceive you have some wit. Do you not wonder how it is I come for you ? "

"I suppose the power of your magic told you I was in difficulty. I had looked for a letter from you, but when it did not come I feared you had forgot me. I am very sorry I disobeyed you, sir."

"You have been punished, Ruth. I was away from Bezurrel when your letter arrived, and my lady despatched it immediately to my lodgings in London. Being upon my homeward journey, I turned aside in order that I might carry you back with me to Moyle, where indeed your presence will soon be necessary. I permitted you to escape with your lover, for I deemed it right you should receive an education in the hard school of your own choosing ; yet when you sent the necklace I would have brought you back."

"You were amazed, sir, to discover me a fortune ? " said Ruth, trying to force a smile.

"When you sent the necklace to my lady, you opened our eyes indeed. You may live, child, a hundred years; yet you can never perform a better deed than was done by you that day."

"Is it of great value, sir ? "

"Of inestimable value, child."

"Oh, Harry ! " sighed Ruth, gazing across the sunny downs. "Return to me and share my fortune."

An hour later the chaise rattled over the cobblestones of Salisbury to the door of the principal inn. Having ordered rooms and a dinner, Sir Thomas set forth alone to make inquiries about Harry ; and was gone so long Ruth became nervous. At length he returned, to be informed by the waiter that the dinner had been put back so often it was now completely spoilt.

"Let another be served," Sir Thomas ordered ; and then he went to Ruth.

"I can make little of this business," he said. "I went to the shop of the tailor, who informed me the young man had been apprehended in his presence, and taken to the Bridewell, upon the charge of stealing the coat of a well-known gentleman in Devonshire. I proceeded to the prison, but was there treated with the utmost incivility by the keeper, who appeared to resent my questions, and indeed refused to answer them. I came to the conclusion he had some good reason for withholding all information from me. So I obtained the address of one of the justices, a pleasant gentleman, who used me civilly, and assured me, after a vast amount of hesitation, he remembered the young man perfectly ; and he was undoubtedly lying in the Bridewell, as other charges yet more serious were likely to be preferred against him. I mentioned how I had been received at the prison, and the worthy justice declared he could not understand it ; yet he appeared uncommonly relieved to bow me out."

"What is it, sir, that perplexes you ?" asked Ruth.

"The strange manner of both the keeper and magistrate. There is no reason why the one should be offended, and the other perplexed, at the natural curiosity of a gentleman."

"Do you suppose, sir, Harry is lying in the prison ?"

"It must be so, for how could he possibly get away ? My poor Ruth, you must abandon hope."

"That, sir, I shall never do."

"You won him too late, child. He is doomed. No jury in these days will permit a robber to escape. Your honest shopkeeper desires to travel in safety and to sleep sound at nights. Alas, poor Ruth, we must seek you out a more worthy valentine come February."

"I will have Harry, or I will have none," cried Ruth. "To-morrow, sir, will you carry me to Bath ; or shall I go alone ?"

"What do you mean, child?"

"When Harry and I parted we made a compact. If he did not return, I was to go to Bath, and stand each day at noon upon the bridge which crosses the Avon in the north parade. There he would meet me; and there, sir, he will meet me."

"Child! Child!" said Sir Thomas sadly. "Come to your dinner and forget these fancies."

"If I am to walk all the way, I go to Bath and wait for Harry," she said. "You tell me the necklace is of inestimable value. I do not want a fortune, now I am lonely and cannot share it; but I must have my memories and the bridge. I know, sir, you will in your kindness sell the necklace and invest the money for me. And I pray you, sir, to advance me a sum, so that I may go to some respectable lodging in the city of Bath, and wait for Harry. I shall stand every day at noon upon the bridge—in hope, sir. And if he is— is hanged," she said, struggling against tears, "I shall still go each day to the bridge, and wait for Harry, until I grow too old, or become too weak, to walk; for the bridge of Bath will join me to my Harry; and to visit it will be the only happiness I shall know."

"Why will you play thus with your misery?"

"Because I love him, sir."

"Such love, child, is too sacred to be scoffed at. Tomorrow I carry you to Bath, and shall myself find a lodging for you; and there I will leave you, upon the understanding that you come to Moyle when I have occasion to send for you."

"Not to dwell, sir. Not without Harry."

"For a few days only; and when hope is dead."

"For what purpose, sir?"

"That I may, at the proper time, reveal the mystery of your birth."

"What, sir!" she cried. "You know my name and the history of my family?"

"I know all."

"Was it the necklet told you?"

"It was the necklet. There is not another like it in the world. No more words, else we shall spoil a second dinner."

He would say no more; and Ruth, who was utterly exhausted, in spite of her long period of inaction, partly perhaps because of it, was glad to seek forgetfulness in sleep. Upon the following morning they left Salisbury; but the weather being wet, and the roads in a very bad condition, they did not enter Bath until late in the afternoon. Sir Thomas was for going out at once to find a lodging, but Ruth dissuaded him.

"I have a feeling," she said, "that I am not to stay long in this city."

"The maid has the gift of second-sight," Sir Thomas murmured to himself.

Ruth was eager to discover the bridge, which was indeed not difficult to find; and pleased herself sadly by walking across it many times; and when they had dined she begged for leave to continue her mournful passages.

"You may go, child; but be careful not to speak to either man or woman. There are many rakes and procuresses in this city," replied Sir Thomas, who had for some time been regarding her eager face with puzzled eyes.

So Ruth went again to the north parade, and passed to and fro across its bridge, until night had fallen; watching that strangely mixed company of the best wits and greatest fools in Europe, flocking to pump-room and gaming-tables from tennis-court, cock-pit or bull-ring; for Bath was in full glory, having but recently been honoured by a royal visit. Sedan-chairs passed, bearing stout ladies wrapped in flannel from the baths to their lodgings, where they would remove these wrappings and dress finely for the night. Great gentlemen, sick Nabobs, livid-faced statesmen, wealthy idlers—representatives of the highest names and the

worst morals in the world—went by ; while Ruth peeped eagerly at every face, sometimes receiving an ogle in response.

With night the bridge and all surroundings became unreal. One minute in darkness, the next weirdly illuminated by the flare of a link-boy's torch, or the flash of carriage-lamps. Revellers were abroad, yet Ruth had no fear of them because she could not think of danger : her mind was settled upon Harry, who had promised to meet her there ; certainly not then, under cover of darkness ; yet, if free, he would act as she herself was doing, and haunt the bridge by day and night until they saw each other.

"A wench ! A wench !" shouted a richly dressed young man, holding his lantern near Ruth's face.

"A mighty pretty one, egad !" cried his companion, catching her by the arm.

"Leave me, gentlemen !" she said angrily.

"Nay, pretty one, you are captured. You are our prize. Call a coach, Harry !"

"Harry !" murmured Ruth, staring at the two faces ; and seeing nothing but disease and vice upon them.

"Ay, your Harry, my love !" shouted the debauchee.

"Young gentlemen !" cried a shrill excited voice, and an old woman ran up to them. "Unhand my daughter ! I have the watch behind me. Let her go, I say, or I'll scratch your eyes out."

She caught Ruth round the waist and forced her onward ; while the revellers cursed and went their way, leaving the bridge again in darkness. Immediately Ruth found herself caught in a strong embrace, and with a sudden faintness she fell to dreaming of sunshine and noon ; and forgot that it was night with damp and odours rising from the river.

"It is not strange ; it is not wonderful. I knew you would be here," she murmured.

"Oh, my Ruth ! my sweetheart ! I have haunted

this bridge ; I have waited three days. Why were ye so long in coming ? ”

“ Where are we, Harry ? ”

“ Over the bridge ; between dark houses. This way to the fields, love. The open country is the only place for us.”

“ Hold me, Harry, until I waken. I arrived in Bath this afternoon. I came to the bridge—you were not here. I dined and came again. I knew you would come. Sir Thomas supposed I was out of my senses. I did not come with an idea you might by some happy chance arrive ; for I was allowed to see the future.”

“ Sir Thomas with you ! ”

“ He rescued me from your uncle.”

A chair passed, accompanied by two link-boys. The lovers saw each other clearly by the light of their torches.

“ Now I am awake. Oh, Harry ! Harry ! God has brought you out of prison and restored you to me. But why are you dressed as an old woman ? ”

“ Can you walk, sweetheart ? ”

“ Ay, walk to Cornwall ! ”

“ Then let us get out of this Bath, which I feel too hot for me.”

“ Sir Thomas awaits me at the White Hart Inn. Come back with me, for all constables are drunk by now, and let me hear your story. I will tell you mine while we return.”

They went very slowly across the bridge and along the parade ; but Ruth had hardly finished her tale before they reached the inn.

“ Sweetheart, I did not think my uncle would go so far,” said Harry sternly. “ Had I known I should have returned to Winterberry. But it was very well I did not know ; for I must have been taken had I stayed. I thought you would run the night I did not return ; and I was getting afraid as the days passed, and still you came not. In these clothes I dared not wait upon

the bridge by day—I have told I know not how many questioners I am out to win a wager, and many stranger things are done by the young bloods who visit Bath—but I spent each evening in this neighbourhood, for I guessed you would never be far distant from our meeting-place. And as I came across the bridge just now, I saw your own sweet face by the light of that rascal's lantern. These clothes are not stolen, Ruthie, I have come by them honestly ; and though they hang so awkwardly upon me, I am more easy in my mind and body than I was in the handsome coat which was very near the cause of my undoing."

"Where is that coat now, Harry?"

"Upon the back of some serving-man, or gone to the second-hand shop. I have no garments save this greasy wear of some old cook of Salisbury ; nor do I possess a single coin ; but methinks I have an empty belly."

"Here are my five guineas, Harry ; I kept them for you. Now you can buy some clothes and get yourself a dinner."

"Ah, sweetheart ! Lucky is the rogue whom heaven supplies with such a guardian angel."

"We are now beside the inn," said Ruth. "You cannot enter, but I shall beg Sir Thomas to come out and speak with you."

"The first inn of Bath is no place for a young gentleman in the clothes of a kitchen woman. But, hark ye, Ruthie, I am by no means safe in this gay city."

"We depart in the morning. Sir Thomas will make a plan. Ah, Harry, did I not tell you how baptism in the water of St. Ludgvan's well would save you soul and body?"

"And you spoke truly ; had it not been for you in the first place, and St. Ludgvan in the second place, I should have gone in the cart to be turned off," he answered.

Bidding him wait at the corner, Ruth entered the inn, and discovered Sir Thomas reading a newspaper.

He listened to her excited narrative ; then rose to go forth, saying, " I am rejoiced for your sake, child. I perceive you do possess the Celtic gift of second-sight ; which formerly I had not believed in."

" What, sir, is Celtic ? " inquired the ignorant Ruth.

" Cornish folk belong to the Celtic race."

" But, sir, I am not Cornish."

" Nay, you are Spanish," he said with a smile.

They went to the awkward Harry, who, when presented to the deliverer of Ruth from his uncle's clutches, behaved in so manly a fashion, and expressed his gratitude with such earnestness, that Sir Thomas had a liking at once for the young adventurer. Proceeding into a quiet street, they strolled in the dark, while Harry explained how it was he found himself at liberty.

" I was taken, sir, to the prison in order that I might be brought before the justices upon the following day. The keeper was a very civil fellow, who had been, I believe, a bit of a dog himself ; and he made very merry over my misfortune, telling me I was a fool to be hanged for a laced coat, when for the same penalty I might have shot the mayor of Salisbury, against whom it appeared he had some grievance. Finding him so merry a fellow, I resolved to test him ; and the same evening, having an opportunity, I drew him aside and whispered I had five guineas hidden in one of my shoes, which if he had the inclination he could earn very easily.

" ' Nay, my lad,' said he. ' You are for the cart, and fifty guineas do not save you.'

" ' It may be I shall enter the cart,' I said. ' But they can never hang me.'

" ' Zounds, man ! ' he cried. ' Have ye a neck of brass ? '

" ' My neck is the same as yours,' I told him. ' But I was baptised in the water of St. Ludgvan's well.'

" ' Say, you so ! ' he cried. ' Why then, you are a Cornishman.'

“ ‘Not only that,’ said I. ‘But I am to be married to the fairest maid in all the Duchy. I did not expect, friend, that you would have heard of St. Ludgvan’s well.’

“ ‘If you are amazed, why so am I,’ he answered. ‘For you are the first man out of Cornwall I have met with who has mentioned St. Ludgvan’s well. I am a Cornishman, brother. And not only that, but I was born in the parish of Ludgvan, and I too was baptised with water from the holy well.’

“ ‘Now you perceive, brother, that I cannot be hanged,’ said I.

“ ‘I perceive this, brother,’ he answered, ‘I am bound to help you escape, lest the credit of St. Ludgvan’s well should be destroyed ; and that, I believe, would mean the ending of the world. There is great power in this water, as we know ; but we must help it, do ye see ? Therefore I know it is my duty to secure your freedom. But how am I to know you are my brother Cornishman ? Come, friend, give me some proof. If you were born west of the Tamar, you will know some sign-words.’

“ ‘Listen, brother, while I tell the numbers—ouyn, dow, tray, peswar, pimp.’ I said, remembering the lesson, sweetheart, you had taught me.

“ ‘Enough, brother ! Here is my hand,’ said he. ‘I will go away now, and shall return when I have thought of some plan for helping you without getting myself into trouble.’

“ Late in the night my friend aroused me, and was then so merry I felt assured of getting free.

“ ‘Brother,’ said he, ‘when we swear to miraculous power in St. Ludgvan’s well, we speak but the truth. I know very well you are not for the gallows, and I am sure St. Ludgvan—whoever he may have been—is doing his best to get you out of prison ; and has indeed supplied the very plan and fellow for this purpose. The constables have brought in a gay young spark who

is a stranger to this city, and a mighty queer figure he cuts, for he is dressed in the clothing of old Betty the cook of the Red Lion Inn. He arrives at Salisbury to visit a young lady, hoping I warrant ye to run with her to Scotland ; but the parents of this maid keep their bird behind bolts and bars ; and have warned my gentleman he will be placed under arrest if caught trespassing. Well, brother, you know the old saw about locked doors and lovers. The young blood bribes Betty the cook to loan him her bonnet and outward garments for the night ; and dressed in these clothes he goes to the young lady's house, with what plan in his head I cannot tell you. Upon the way it so happens he runs into a watchman, who mistakes my young rake for Mrs. Betty, chucks her under the chin, then attempts to kiss her. The young gentleman flies into a temper and beats the watchman soundly ; and the constables being out, and hearing the fellow's cries, run up and carry off my gentleman. Now, brother, it is my opinion that the good saint Ludgvan has arranged all this for the special benefit of one of his own Cornish lads.'

" 'Maybe,' said I. ' But how is this young rake going to assist me ? '

" ' I shall now proceed to tell you,' said my friend. ' He is in a great state of mind at being taken in Betty's gown and bonnet, and has declared he will strangle himself rather than be brought before the justices in such attire. I have told him I shall not permit him to send for his own garments ; but I will myself, for a consideration, supply him with a very handsome suit. Now, brother, I desire you to strip, so that I may carry your clothes to the young gentleman ; and I shall bring you presently the garments of Betty, in which you shall appear before the justices to-morrow.'

" ' This is a very pretty trick,' said I. ' But the tailor's assistant is the principal witness against me ; and he knows my face.'

" ' You may leave that matter to me,' said the

keeper. 'I will undertake to have this young gentleman's case brought on first ; for it will not last five minutes. I am about to carry a guinea to the watchman, who I know is a very kindly fellow ; and as you will appear to answer this charge, and I can readily persuade the watchman not to give evidence against you, the justices will discharge you immediately. Then you must run from the city, and get well away before the young gentleman comes up in your clothes to answer the charge against you. He will be mightily astonished to hear himself called Job Cay, and to discover he has to plead not guilty to a charge of highway robbery ; but he will not be hurt by it, for the justices—who I must inform you are an uncommon lot of blockheads—will believe you have tricked him ; and I shall do nothing to discourage that opinion. Therefore he too will be discharged. You will be by that time well away upon Salisbury Plain. The credit of St. Ludgvan's well will be saved again. And I do not know that I shall be out of pocket by this trickery.'

" ' Brother,' said I, while pressing his hand, ' I have only five guineas. Here are four ; one I must keep to get me food.'

" As I am here, sir," continued Harry, addressing himself to Sir Thomas, " you will perceive that the plan did not miscarry. The keeper provided me with a parcel of bread and meat, which I hid in the pocket of this skirt ; and when discharged with a caution as to my future behaviour, amid much merriment on the part of the worthy justices, I escaped from the city, concealed myself in a hay-stack until nightfall, and then set out for Bath, reaching the city boundaries early the next morning. Since then, sir, I have waited for Ruth, and assured at least a hundred persons I am out in the cook's clothing to win a wager. Yet the report may have followed, so that I dread any moment to be challenged."

" I shall see to your safety," Sir Thomas promised.

"Wait in this quiet street, and I will send Ruth to you presently with a suit of my own clothes, which I shall not require you to return. Then you will go to some place outside the city, discard these garments, and return dressed suitably to spend the night where you will. To-morrow morning be at the yard of the White Hart Inn by eight, and I shall carry you with us into Cornwall."

"Sir, if I enter Moyle, I may be arrested at the suit of Jacob Grambla."

"You shall not enter Moyle. I am to make trial of you, Cay, for I desire to learn whether you are worthy of this young lady. I leave you at a farm which belongs to me, though it is situated some twenty miles from Moyle church-town. The tenant is a worthy man, and I shall inform him you are to work on his farm and gain some instruction in agriculture, which may be of service to you at some future time. I believe your period of labour will not be long."

"I am indeed grateful to you, sir; and I shall endeavour to please you," the young man answered.

They departed from Bath the next morning and, travelling in safety, came into Cornwall at evening upon the second day; reaching the farm about mid-day, and there leaving Harry to begin his life afresh, and to win blistered hands at last; afterwards driving towards Moyle at the highest speed, for Sir Thomas was anxious to be home before dusk, and the days were closing in. But, as they drew within sight of Great Gwentor, his amazement was great to discover a number of vehicles all going in the same direction as themselves.

"Some great thing is happening in Moyle to-night," he said to Ruth. "These are the carriages of small gentry from the adjoining parishes—ship-owners, people of an hundred acres, with a parson or two. No person of quality passes. I believe Jacob Grambla gives another of his parties."

CHAPTER V

JACOB GIVES A PARTY

THE glow of candlelight in Coinagehall was sufficient to show that Jacob Grambla indeed gave a party ; and, being a gentleman who conceived it proper to mimic the ways of London society, according to information afforded him by the newspapers, he required the company to appear in masquerade, and not to reveal themselves in their true characters until a signal was made at two o'clock in the morning.

Near the door stood Jacob, in the character of a Friar, to receive the guests, whom it was his duty not to recognise. To him appeared Italian Shepherdess, Cardinal, Druid, Quack-Doctor, Vestal, Jockey, Sultana, Diana, Political Bedlamite, with many another stock character of the masquerade. A daring lady appeared as a Daughter of Venus ; showing—in the words of the host—that true elegance of form might be expressed without embroidery and diamonds. A gentleman, more daring, came in the character of Adam ; in a dress fitting so closely, and painted so naturally, that at a glance there was some excuse to imagine he had studied the part in too liberal a fashion.

At such an entertainment it was no unusual thing—especially when the party was political—for the uninvited guest to make an appearance. Dancing and gaming were in full swing, when Jacob, in making a tour of the rooms, perceived a little fellow whom he could not name. This stranger wore the familiar parti-coloured dress of a jester, but carried no bauble ; while his red mask was so large as to obliterate his

features. He passed about the rooms, by far the most sprightly figure there, with a jest for all ; winning taps from the fans of ladies, and many a shout of laughter from the gentlemen. Jacob followed, anxious to get the red mask into a corner and to enjoy a few words with him.

"Excellent lady! Matchless wife!" cried the motley, bowing before the Daughter of Venus.

"Jester, I am neither wife, maid, nor widow," replied the lady.

"Excellent mineral! Matchless vegetable!" said the jester.

"I am an immortal, jester."

"There is much virtue in that letter T, dear lady."

Jacob pursued the jester into another room, where he went up to Adam, who acted his part with very little dignity, and asked, "Do you not know me, father?"

"I am acquainted, jester, with only snakes and ladies," replied Adam.

"What!" cried the motley. "Not recognise your son!"

"'Tis a wise man who knows his child," said Adam.

With the laughter against him, the red mask ran up to a costume made of cards, and said, "I see the king, and I see the queen; but where, fair lady, is the knave?"

"He is the knave who puts the question," came the answer, and again the laugh went up against the jester.

"A company of wits, sir," remarked Jacob, as the little figure reached the hall.

"A very pleasant company, good friar," replied the jester. "Yet I believe they could listen with advantage to your sermons. Plenty of wit, friar, but not much modesty."

"Nor morals, jester?"

"A village maid would shame the lot."

"Nor religion, jester?"

"No more than you would find in the bell of a

church, which makes a mighty noise concerning religion, but has none itself."

"Do you know me, jester?"

"Very well indeed, holy man. And you will know me when all unmask. You believe I come uninvited; yet the truth is I am so well disguised that my own mother would not know me."

"I shall be glad, jester, to learn your name, and to see your face."

"You urged me to come, friar; though, to speak plainly, I had a more pressing engagement."

"I am greatly honoured," said Jacob. "So, jester, you have but an ill opinion of this company?"

"And if I am to judge, friar, you have a very mean opinion of your guests."

"As host I must disguise my feelings. To-night, jester, we all wear masks."

"Express yourself, not as host, but as a godly friar. Here is a choice collection of characters—your friends, holy man. You see that plump female dressed as a nun; her body round like a barrel. She loves a cut of beef, I warrant. What, as a friar, do you think of her?"

"For all her size she will dance the hornpipe like your sailor-boy," replied Jacob with alacrity. "She has a large family, but I doubt whether she could tell you the names of her children; for, as a lady who desires to be exceedingly polite, she disdains her offspring, and leaves them to be educated by groom and chambermaid. But she is a very respectable person, who promotes the cause of gaming, and has already run through a great part of her fortune."

"People much given to playing cards are sometimes in need of your assistance, friar?"

"Why, jester, that is true."

"You preach a sermon, friar; and very properly demand a fee in return for your eloquence?"

"A modest fee, jester."

"I understand, friar, you are noted for modesty."

But how does the Italian Shepherdess appear to your priestly eye ? ”

“ You will perceive, jester, her one idea is to fascinate the men. Her husband is a plodding fellow, who keeps at his business to supply her with the latest fashions, and to enable her to make a figure in the county. She hates the man for the meanness of his stature and the poorness of his wit ; while he is so infatuated with her charms—which nobody but himself has been able to discover—that he indulges her in every whim, and is mighty pleased to feel her foot upon his neck.”

“ May I presume, friar, that the husband requires a loan occasionally ? ”

“ And let me assure you, jester, he gets it so low as ten per centum.”

“ There is moderation indeed ! And who is the gentleman with a chin of unpolished mahogany, who appears in the character of the devil ? ”

“ Ah, jester ! you see how well he plays the deputy for his master ; and that is a position he can easily support as he has great wealth. His grandfather, let me inform you, was a convict who when transported made a fortune by planting sugar. From one of his by-blows this gentleman descends ; and he possesses, I do assure you, far less virtue than his ancestor. Indeed, had he not presented large sums to certain ministers in power, he would long ago have been carried to the gallows.”

“ I see you are as catholic in your tastes as in your dress,” said the red mask. “ Pray who is the coxcomb, attired as an orange-girl, standing near the convict’s grandson ? I never saw such a foppish figure of a man in all my life.”

“ Ho ! ho ! ” laughed the friar. “ What will you say when I tell you the orange-girl is a general of the army ? ”

“ That I can hardly believe,” said the jester.

“ ’Tis true nevertheless. He is a delicate and harmless creature, and no lady in the land has a toilette so

well furnished with powders and washes. He spends the greater part of his day before a mirror, setting off his person to the highest advantage. He not only aspires to look like a lady, but to act as one ; and should a mouse run across the room you would see my general the first to skip upon a chair. Now he has grown so weak by his effeminate ways of living that he could not advance with his army unless carried in a chair."

"The gentleman splendidly attired in gold as a Sultan is, I take it, a man of some importance?" continued the jester.

"Merely a tailor," replied Jacob, "who has gained a fortune, as the bird of prey obtains a living, with his bill. Having obtained money like a knave, he now spends it like a fool in trying to make a figure in the county. The Quack-Doctor, on the other hand, desires to be considered a knave, though he is nothing more than a good-natured fool. He owns a large property, but leaves the administration of it to his wife, whom you may there perceive in the character of Diana ; though she is twice the man that he is. Possessing neither wit nor knavery, he trusts all men, believes every lie, and actually supposes Diana is faithful."

"The Vestal yonder has long engaged my attention, friar."

"She is of very common birth, but has made herself important by laying out her capital of beauty to the best advantage ; although, as you shall perceive when her mask is off, she squandered the last blush of a naturally blooming cheek many years ago. Her father was engaged in the fishing trade, and upon his death she goes to the market with her face, and has the good fortune to sell herself to a gentleman just arrived from the Indies. My lady, having caught her husband, proceeds to show him what the devil of a creature woman can be ; and for my part I am heartily sorry for the man, who is never seen in company with her, as

the very sight of him provokes her to fury. At home she behaves like a Bedlamite ; here you behold her obliging and polite, save when she loses at the cards. Temper has destroyed her charms, and now she has nothing to live for except dress. I should be sorry to say she sees fit to appear as a vestal because that is of all characters the most unfitting ; for, speaking as a friar, jester, I would but tell the truth, and would not judge my fellow creatures harshly. Yet I believe you would not wish to be her husband."

" Not for the world, good friar. Who is the Dryad standing in admiration at her side ? "

" She is my lady's toad-eater."

" Yet another fine character, a very showy personage, and gay as a butterfly. He appears as a rake, and surely he does not wear disguise."

" He is in masquerade, I do assure you. Can you name me his profession ? "

" By my soul, I cannot, unless he be a dancing-master."

" Nay, jester. He is a clergyman."

" You have a mind to be jocular, friar. That capering beau a parson ! Who would trust his soul to the care of a butterfly ? "

" He has several good livings, and is like to get more. Once during five years he makes a grand tour to visit his parishes and to tease his curates ; for 'tis a point of honour with him to have preached in each one of his churches. He is a man born to live upon the labour of his fellow-creatures without doing anything to deserve it ; yet he has a passable understanding and a taste for literature. He laughs at the bishops ; they call him coxcomb ; he regards them little, but wraps himself up in his pluralities and rolls triumphant through his parishes."

" I am diverted with his airs and graces. He is as busy as a bee among the fair sex ; and I may suppose he is allowed to enjoy a tolerable share of honey ? "

"That is indeed the case, jester. The parson is master of that little talk with which women are much pleased. He can suit his company to a card-table or the cock-pit. He is too well-bred to intrude upon the delicacy of those whom he addresses ; for instance, he would never think of conversing with another parson upon divinity, or with a lady of quality upon politeness ; because he knows these are subjects they have nothing to do with."

"One other character interests me, holy man," said the red mask. "'Tis yonder long-shanked fellow, who masquerades as a Roman Consul. He seems to be in a mighty fidget."

"He is a doctor, my good jester, and is of so restless a disposition that he cannot stand in one place for more than a minute. He is so much in love with motion that, before midnight, he will have visited every corner of this mansion, and gone in the dark around the garden. 'Tis said he has killed so many patients that his conscience now suffers from St. Vitus's dance ; therefore he appears in the character of Roman Consul, who has subjugated a territory and slaughtered one half of the inhabitants. See the rogue start ! You would think a catchpole was at his shoulder. And now, my good jester, I am sorry to desert you, but I must again mingle with my guests."

"You have diverted me exceedingly, friar ; and I am much obliged for your information. Your friends, I perceive, are uncommonly well supplied with all the vices."

"I have conversed with you, jester, in my character of friar. As host I shall discover in this company all the virtues."

"We shall meet again, good friar," cried the jester.

They parted and Jacob saw the red mask no more ; nor could he obtain information from any of the guests regarding the identity of this stranger. The jester had certainly departed ; yet no horse had been brought

from the stable, and no carriage had been ordered. When the lady in the character of Diana observed she had not felt at her ease in the motley's presence, Jacob trembled.

About three o'clock the company began to depart, many of them glad to go, for there had been quarrels between some of the masks, of whom not a few had drunk too deeply; and there had also been some awkward recognitions. An hour later the rooms were empty; the last tired servant had gone to bed; and the house was in darkness save in the saloon, where candles were guttering in their sconces. Jacob flung back the shutters, then opened the windows to dispel the fumes. He sank upon a chair and looked out for the dawn.

"The fools are gone, the lights are out, the treasure is exhausted," he muttered. "I must to work again. Now I play the last card and claim my son; and if Sir Thomas would take him from me he shall pay the ransom."

He was staring into the garden; and by the raw light all the strange monsters in yew and box and holly appeared to live and move.

"The hour before dawn; when men sleep tight and burglars are abroad. I have an uneasiness in my mind—I feel as though I had not always done my duty. Yet I am fortified by the knowledge that I have religion. I preach, I baptise, I pray in public; and if I practise no religious exercise in secret, 'tis because I would have men know I am no hypocrite. Who was that jester? What brought him here? I know well he received no invitation. And how did he depart? And why were my guests afraid of him? As I sit here—somewhat afraid of sleep—watching these dying candles, I am reminded of the kitchen yonder, where I sat after the wench had robbed me. That haze promises the dawn. I would give what little I now possess to be told that jester's name. What little I

possess—yet in a few days the fools will come for advice ; with sums to invest, with property to sell ; for many I know are dipped. The figure was much the same—maybe a trifle higher. The voice not familiar. One minute he stood in yonder doorway. The next——”

“ Jacob Grambla ! ” called a voice.

Upon the threshold stood Red Cap. The same apparition, with the wound upon its face, and the smoky light surrounding. For a moment Jacob was conscious only that melting wax was dripping on the carpet. Then he rose shivering to his feet.

“ I know not how it is, yet I expected ye. I feel less terror than before. By that I know I have not done ill.”

“ Take off that habit, Jacob Grambla.”

“ You are welcome,” stammered the lawyer. “ This habit indeed means nothing.”

“ While wearing it you found no virtue in your guests. While disguised you were yourself.”

“ Come, jester, we were friends a few hours ago. Let us again make merry. Can it be that you—a spirit—mingled with my guests ? ”

“ Approach and put your hands upon me—if you have the courage. Yet I warn you ! ”

“ It is past cockcrow—yet you linger. Surely you cannot survive the dawn.”

“ I am with you now—each night—until the end.”

“ Do you lead me to more treasure ? ”

“ Did I not tell you, when we stood together upon Great Gwentor . . . ? Nay, I perceive you remember my warning now. How have you spent the treasure ? What poor creature have you helped ? Every guinea has been spent upon yourself. Instead of lifting the curse from me by your good endeavour, you have condemned me to a further period of wandering upon this earth. Soon you shall wander with me.”

“ I will make amends—give all I have to the poor.”

“ That I believe you cannot do. The guinea you offered would cling to your hand as closely as the skin.”

"If I have not done my duty, I know not what duty means."

"Remember Ruth!"

"A wicked wench who robbed me. Ay, and the fellow who swore he was her brother robbed me too. I am a poor simple gentleman, the dupe of every rascal."

"Remember your title to Coinagehall. Remember the Clabars!"

Jacob began to bite his fingers, and to tremble. "I have not invented my profession," he muttered.

"No man at this period of the world's history, can be so ingenious as to discover a new crime. Yet he may lose his soul by practising the old ones."

"An unpaid debt."

"Of a few guineas."

"Sir, it is the custom."

"Custom, Jacob Grambla, fills the air with unhappy spirits, like myself, who long to escape, but cannot. No more words. Henceforth I haunt you."

"Is there left me no loophole of escape?"

"None, Jacob Grambla. Yet you may escape a great part of your punishment by restoring this property to its rightful owner; and by proclaiming to Moyle the truth concerning Ruth and Peter Clabar."

"You are indeed an apparition from the dead," said Jacob hoarsely. Then he cried, "The light breaks! This is the day of my repentance."

"Too late for your happiness," replied Red Cap. "Yet not too late for your salvation."

"I shall restore the property to the Clabars—I shall pay every man; I shall live in poverty; I shall go out naked."

"Can you do these things?"

"I reform from this hour. I go to sleep, and shall arise a new man—a poor and honest gentleman."

Mocking laughter sounded through the saloon, where the flames of the last candles leapt from dripping wax; and when Jacob looked about he found himself alone.

CHAPTER VI

A DAY OF QUARRELS ENDING WELL

UPON visiting the churchyard after her return, Ruth was mightily astonished to find her mother's grave protected by a fence, which swine could not uproot, and churchwardens were afraid to destroy. One day while bringing her offering of flowers, Cherry approached upon a similar pilgrimage ; but she carried wild-flowers of the wood, and these were few because summer was nearly gone. As they drew together it occurred to Ruth that Clabar's handsome son was none too well-disposed towards her.

"So you are returned, Mrs. Ruth. I trust you enjoyed your holiday in Wiltshire," said Cherry.

"I was not aware, Master Peter, that anybody knew I had been in Wiltshire," replied Miss Runaway.

"Sir Thomas has few secrets from me ; even though he must heap favours upon you."

"You are much mistaken. Both Sir Thomas and my lady are somewhat too hard upon me. I am forbidden to join the prayer-meeting at Master Honey's, or to walk about Moyle church-town. I may not even leave the castle without permission. I am not allowed to forget I have been disobedient. If Sir Thomas tells you everything, it may be you know my name and history."

"It seems I have my own history to discover. Yours is of no account to me," said Cherry impatiently.

"You speak very strangely for a young gentleman."

"You would crow over me, I think. You have a pretty fine opinion of yourself because you are a

fortune, and you believe you may awake some morning, and find yourself hailed as a young lady of quality."

"How do you know I am a fortune?"

"Mr. David tells me. And you love a highwayman, who now whistles behind the plough and no doubt robs his master. God help the farmer's daughters!"

"For shame, Master Peter!"

"And Sir Thomas must needs make a mighty fuss over your mother's grave, while he leaves the resting-place of my mother to the sheep. He has discovered your history, and knows your mother was some great lady. So he permits you to bring flowers from Bezurrel gardens to scatter upon her grave; while I must be satisfied with the weeds I can gather in the woodland. But lady or no lady, I shall ride over you yet, although I possess no diamonds."

"Pray what would a young gentleman be doing with diamonds?"

"Hold your tongue, wench!" cried Cherry.

"I shall have no more words with you. I would not be seen standing here with so cowardly a fellow," said Ruth, as she turned away.

"Ay, I know your tastes. You are for the man who is brave and virtuous; who will lie behind hedges and snatch a purse from ladies; who has run for his life a hundred times. Like goes to like, Mistress Ruth. I wish you joy with your robber and long life in your den of thieves. But if ever I see you walking on my mother's grave, I shall drag you out of the churchyard by your hair."

In this wicked frame of mind Miss Jealousy strode away to tidy and decorate the unfenced grave, which an hour later was as desolate as before; while Ruth, equally angry, but sorely puzzled, resolved never again to speak with the young bully, who could so far abuse his sex as to insult a maiden. "Strong and handsome he may be," she murmured, "but I would rather enjoy one day with my Harry than a life with him."

Cherry retired towards home, still in a jealous frame of mind ; for she was angered by the stubborn silence of Sir Thomas, and thought it intolerable he should lavish love and attention upon the grave of Ruth's mother, merely because he knew she had been higher in rank than the unfortunate Mrs. Clabar, and far more beautiful ; but, when nearing the turning, where the lane beside the woods touched the road to Moyle, she heard a disturbance which robbed her of petty spite ; and waiting saw presently a rabble assembly of men and boys, hooting and throwing refuse at the tall and stately figure of Father Benedict, who walked in front with a cloak drawn round his head.

"The good old man continually provokes the village. I have warned Sir Thomas his life would be in danger," Cherry whispered.

A little man, richly dressed, leapt forward and seizing the cloak, held on with wondrous valour, shouting at the top of his voice :

"To the pond with the bald-pate ! The law is with us. No priest is allowed in this good protestant country. Come, neighbours, kick the Jesuit fox !"

"Jacob Grambla—active at last !" muttered Cherry. Then she passed to the hedge and broke away a rod of hazel.

The rabble did not advance. Its members were horribly afraid of the old priest and, although disposed to persecute an alien—more in the way of natural feeling than in obedience to their leader, who had aroused their passions—they were not in the mood to duck him. For they feared the priest's master. Besides Jacob grew unpopular ; he had robbed many a parishioner, and he was plainly under the displeasure of heaven, for all his prayers and sermons, since a spirit had been sent to haunt him.

"Were this fellow in a town he would be clapped immediately into jail," Jacob went on. "This is country, and he finds himself protected by Sir Thomas

Just—who, I declare to you, neighbours, is the foulest wizard in the world—therefore he may go about our church-town, spy into our houses, and do the devil's work with half our young folk."

"He has done much good," cried Cherry, stepping forward. "He has paid the rent of many of your tenants, whom you would gladly have driven out into the fields."

"Ah, young gentleman! So you and I meet!"

"And I have sworn to whip you."

"Do so then!" shouted the valiant Jacob, drawing his sword to oppose her rod of hazel; so that even the idlers shouted in disgust.

"Fair play, master," called a voice. "Put up your weapon and go at young gentleman with your hands."

"That he will never do," cried Cherry scornfully.

"I will pay them all and free myself," howled Jacob.

"Stand aside," said the priest to Cherry in a voice that compelled obedience.

"Moyle has been tormented by witchcraft since Sir Thomas brought this fox to dwell among us. Himself a wizard, he brings a wife, a most notorious enchantress, who has bound us all by magic spells," shouted Jacob, having prudently turned his back on Cherry. "If we do not end it, there will be neither man nor woman in the place who shall escape destruction. To the pond with this sneaking Jesuit! Assist me, neighbours, else I shall denounce the lot of ye; I shall have the law against the whole community—ay, I shall swear you gave protection to the Catholics."

"Back!" cried Cherry, as some of the hot-heads threatened.

"Young Peter has also been seduced by him. To the pond with him!" yelled Jacob.

"Nay, he is one of ourselves. He is a parishioner."

"My good nonconformists," began the priest, facing the rabble with some appearance of contempt. "So I believe you call yourselves, and for my part I care

little what name of religion you take so long as you are Christian in your lives. I freely admit the Catholic priest is not permitted in this land ; yet a gentleman of that religion must have his minister. If I disobey the law, what of yourselves, who have but lately broken from the church, as by law established, and now spend your nights defying it ? ”

“ Do not listen, my lads. He is an idolater and an Antichrist. He raises spirits,” Jacob shouted, still harping upon the same old string, since all the rest were broken.

“ Where is the man who has harmed you, who has brought misery into Moyle, and difficulties into the lives of its inhabitants ? ” the priest continued. “ He is not Sir Thomas Just, whom you call an alien, and believe is indifferent to you. He is not Father Benedict, who devotes his life to study and to ministry. Who is the man who has given you ill advice, who has invested your money so carelessly as to lose it, who has taken your property, and made this parish one of the poorest in all Cornwall ? There stands the man, my friends—unprotected, hated, haunted ! ”

Jacob sprang out like a maniac to beat at the priest with his sword ; and when it was snatched from him by Cherry, again appealing wildly for assistance. A few rough men came forward, not out of love for Jacob, but in anger at the alien’s domineering manner ; and there must have followed a scene of violence, perhaps of murder, had not the priest advanced to meet them, dropping his cloak, throwing off his hat, and removing the grey beard from his face. While Jacob threw out his arms in terror, and every one wished himself at home or out to sea.

“ A master may only learn the truth by going among his servants in disguise,” said Sir Thomas. “ I have some kindness for my people. I know their lives ; I have watched over their affairs. As for this man,” he continued, looking sternly at Jacob, seeing more

back than front, "he and I meet for the first time. Nor will it be long before we meet again—and then, I trust, he will allow me to see his face."

For Jacob was slinking away like a frightened dog.

"Is it your wish, sir, that we should throw him in the pond?" inquired a rough fellow with the utmost reverence.

"Let him walk with his sins," replied Sir Thomas; then he turned away with Cherry, and the rabble hurried back to spread in Moyle the news that the lord of Bezurrel cared for the people, while Jacob Grambla was not worth a gwean.

"I thought I knew you, sir; but it appears I do not. When you spoke to me just now I supposed you had made that grey beard grow upon your face," said Cherry.

"You are far from knowing me, child, if you still believe I am a magician," he answered.

"May I doubt what is well known?"

"By the dull and superstitious, child. You are neither one nor the other. Yet I find you accepting folk-tales."

"When we first met, you penetrated my disguise."

"By human intelligence, child."

"You read my fortune from a printed book."

"Nay, child, I read from the impressions of my mind."

"You knew Ruth's mother—you have fenced in her grave."

"I did not know Ruth's mother; yet I believe she was a worthy woman."

"You declare I am not Clabar's daughter."

"I am about to claim you as my daughter."

"You cannot make me your daughter except by magic."

"Or by matrimony. It is upon that subject I desire to speak. I should have sent for you this evening had we not met."

"Let us first close up this argument. If you tell me you have no spells, I must believe. Yet Mother Gothel, a poor ignorant woman, is a witch; and she declares you are her master in the black art."

"Mother Gothel is indeed ignorant; and I fear a great perverter of the truth. My ordinary intelligence is witchcraft to her ignorance. You, with uncommon wit and learning, mistake a student for a wizard. Fie, child! You are little better in this respect than these Moyle wiseacres, who suppose that my lady and myself proceed here from the East—France or Arabia 'tis the East to them—furnished with all the enchantments of the ages. My lady is a sorceress indeed, for she has bound me by a spell which shall not be broken; but the only arts she practises are commonly known as music and painting—these, child, did not originate in hell."

"But, sir, the apparition which now haunts Grambla!"

"Well, child! What of it?"

"It is your work."

"That I may not deny."

"If you call up spirits of the dead, you are—and must be—the most potent of magicians."

"A few minutes ago I was Father Benedict; now I am Sir Thomas Just. The change has been effected without magic. A little trickery plays havoc with the guilty conscience of a rogue. Even a ghost may appear upon the stage, and if he mimes well must give a thrill. But now that we speak of Grambla, let me again forewarn you. Has he yet shown friendliness?"

"To-day, sir, was the first time I ever spoke with him."

"He will come," said Sir Thomas firmly, "and will make, I believe, a mighty protestation of affection for John Clabar. When that time comes you will send me word."

"Grambla in love would not be Grambla."

"But Grambla offering love for hatred is himself. You see him now aroused, fighting for property, fair name—ay, for life itself. His fortune is exhausted, and he now perceives he has lost, while spending it, his former influence, by making new friends at a distance and despising the old ones amongst whom he lives. He is also oppressed by the terror of exposure."

"And above all, sir, he dreads your power."

"Supposing, like yourself, my Cherry, that I know everything, and can read his secrets, as I once feigned to read your future from the musty pages of Sidney's *Arcadia*."

They were now in the woodland, walking along a pleasant pathway overhung with honeysuckle.

"I am young and strong. Let me bear the priest," said Cherry archly; and Sir Thomas smiled in his grave fashion while placing his late disguise upon her arm.

"You too are an enchantress, child; yet all charming women belong to that race," he said. "You have transformed Bezurrel Woods; many a flower grows here which I did not note last season. I find it hard to grow displeased with you—for is not this your territory?"

"If you frown, sir, I must bid you go."

"Ay, I have heard often of your tyranny. Beneath it poor John Clabar has quite lost his sullenness."

"No sour face enters my woods, nor walks beneath my honeysuckle. Such is the law, sir. Would you threaten me?"

"Such is my desire. This morning I was in a passion, as my lady will tell you. It was when I had received your artful message."

"Was it not well done? I placed my letter in the volume, so that it should fall open at the title of *Love's Labour's Lost*; and I gave the book to David, for it was proper that he should deliver it into your hand."

"It was not well done."

"It is not well to speak the truth?"

"It causes disappointment, even bitterness. Child, you treat the future as a house of cards; and sweep all down with one wilful movement of your hand."

"I look upon the future as I have regarded these woods—over which I reign. I have sown my seeds, and you, Sir Sourface, would trample on the springing years."

"You grow too bold."

"And you too serious. I do not recognise the Frown King. I will make no treaty with him. A potent monarch he may be across the lane, but a Pretender here."

"This letter is your ultimatum?"

"Not my challenge, but my prayer. I declare peace, Sir Thomas; and I ask for happiness."

"If you had spoke of this before!"

"I could not speak, not even in these garments, until I had discovered that to obey your wishes was impossible."

"This means more to me than you can dream of."

"Consider what it means to me. Sir, when happiness and ambition race together, both cannot win the prize. Ambition is commonly blown at the end of the first stage, and then it fouls happiness, with the result that sorrow, which started like the tortoise, passes the two of them. I enter happiness only for the race, and would win or lose with that."

"What is this?" Sir Thomas asked, as they drew near the stream.

"A summer-house which I have made these last few weeks. The sun is caught in it early, and cannot escape until evening. I believe my father turns poet, for he sits here to write; but hides the paper when he sees me coming. Is it not strange how men are ashamed to be caught writing poetry?"

"No more of this," said Sir Thomas almost roughly. "I shall here make my last appeal; and if it fails—why then you must go your wilful way."

"With your blessing, sir?"

"That I cannot withhold. Come into this arbour."

"There is a formality which you would overlook. Will it please you to smile first?"

"Come, child!" he said impatiently; but with the words complied.

They sat in the arbour so long that the sun had escaped before they left. Cherry was now more dignified, but happy, and she was inclined to feel shame at the roughness of her hands. Moreover she declared her neck was brown. They advanced a little way upward; for mist was rising from the water—yet the wood was in splendour at the close of day—while Cherry could smell the trees, the sea, and the moor.

"How glorious is life!" she shouted suddenly, as if unable to control herself.

"What is your answer?" Sir Thomas asked tenderly; they were walking arm in arm.

"The same. A woman will often change her mind; but once in her life she has it fixed. Poor Ruth! I am sorry I lost my temper with her; for she has little, and I have much. Poor sister Ruth!"

"Her happiness is assured."

"I am almost afraid to return to Halcyon. John Clabar loves me so well it will almost break his heart to lose me."

"I go now to speak with David."

"Where is Martin?"

"In London."

"A woodland life—yet I have been happy in it," she said. "In poverty, in romance, as boy or girl, I have been happy. Must you go? I do not like to part with you now."

"Come in the morning to Bezurrel, for I have much more to tell you. Good night, sweet daughter mine."

"Good night, my dearest father."

CHAPTER VII

JACOB'S LAST STAKE

ONCE more Jacob trod the rocky pathway to Mother Gothel's hovel ; which was the shrine of the only religion he could comprehend. During twenty years he had visited that place, supposing himself to be master of the witch, yet never discovering he was her dupe. And now at last he came to save his life.

The old woman sat beside her fire, a cat upon each side, and bunches of herbs above her head. One brown hand stirred the pot, while the other held a fragment of clay pipe between her gums. She looked so much more wicked than she was. Appearance, hovel, even smoke and odours, were necessary for her existence ; since nobody would have waited upon a witch who sat in a neat parlour, with a bright kettle singing on the hearth, and a canary trilling at the window.

" Master Grambla ! " she cried. " You ha' been long a-coming."

" Red Cap is returned ; he comes to my rout, mixes with my guests in jester's garb ; speaks to them and to me like a fellow of the town ; and at dawn appears in his own malignant shape. He now haunts me every night. He walks with me in the garden. He follows to the house. He threatens to stay with me to the end."

So Jacob gabbled, falling to his knees before the witch upon whose wisdom he depended.

" I say you ha' been long a-coming, Master Grambla," she repeated sourly, drawing her grimy skirt from contact with his ruffles.

"What do you mean, dear Mammy?"

"While you be spending fortunes you never come near me."

"I sent you a silk gown and a purse of money."

"You never sent me meat. You never came to pass a word of kindness wi' old mother. You promised to build me a house wi' two floors, Master Grambla."

"I'll do it yet, Mammy. I'll build you a proper house, if you come with me to Coinagehall and lay this spirit. And you are to prepare a brew for Sir Thomas, and drench him with it at new moon, so that he may lose his cursed power. I would have you settle him to the day of doom; for he has gone about Moyle, disguised as his old priest, who I now perceive never leaves the castle. He has gathered information against me—has listened to the lies of gossip—and now sends this hellish Red Cap for my ruin. I am alone, Mammy. Even my servants run from a haunted master."

"He sent him once to be your fortune. Tell me this, master—why did Sir Thomas make you rich? You cannot answer, so I'll tell ye. When a magician calls up spirits he ain't allowed to choose; he must take the one who answers. There's a plenty of red caps in the land of spirits. Some be big and some be little; some be fat and some be thin. But all of them ha' hid away money in their lifetimes. If a red cap comes to a gentleman once, 'tis well; but if he comes twice, 'tis mortal ill—for he don't wear the cap his second visit."

"Why, that's the truth. He appears to me now with a head uncovered; but he smells the same, Mammy—always most villainously of brimstone."

"Your time ha' come, master," said Mother Gothel.

"I'll serve ye no longer, lest I be moonstruck. I won't go to Coinagehall, for sun, moon, and stars be all agin ye. And I dare not brew a pot of broth to drench Sir Thomas, for he would strike stiff a poor old witch body. The devil himself goes a tiptoe when he hears Sir

Thomas coming. You ha' been too long a-coming, Master Grambla."

"Here is a purse, Mammy. I will give you all—my house and land, my cottages, my mortgages—if you can set me free."

"Keep your gold, master. 'Tis the first time I ha' refused money, and 'twill be the last, I reckon. I likes to sleep o' nights, and if I took your money now I would be scratched by hell-cats. Give Coinagehall back to the Clabars—and learn the truth, master."

"What truth, Mammy?"

"Ay, and tell me the truth," cried Mother Gothel. "You have played with all Moyle and robbed half the folk in it; but you can't play wi' a witch for ever. Sit you there, master, till I call."

She dropped her pipe and went out of the hovel. At her summons Jacob arose and followed her outside. The day was clouded. Mother Gothel stood beside the spring of clear water, where the maids of Moyle came upon Maundy Thursday to throw in buttons, and tell their future by the number of bubbles that uprose; and, while pointing at the water with her magic wand, she told the superstitious man to kneel and gaze into the depths.

"It is dark; the water seems to boil," he muttered. "Ah, now I see a picture—a figure upon the cliff, holding a lantern."

"Do ye know the man, Master Grambla?"

"The water lies! I am no wrecker."

"Go back," commanded the witch. "Come again when I call ye. I may not charm the water in your presence."

A minute later Jacob knelt again by the enchanted spring; and now the water seemed darker than before.

"I have seen that room," he muttered, breathing heavily. "That man with the child in his arms, looking down upon the bed—he is myself. There is no movement."

" 'Tis the past," said Mother Gothel.

" This is very like your former home."

" Where am I ? "

" I know not. Here are two infants—and myself."

" Now, master, confess you ha' played the rogue."

" Does Sir Thomas know of this ? "

" That's nought to me. Go your way, master, for I have done with ye. I help no man who is cursed by heaven and haunted by hell. Go your way yonder ! " she cried, pointing towards the summit of Great Gwentor.

" Help me, Mammy ! Save me—I believe you can. I have always protected you. When they would have thrown you into the pond, to sink or swim, I would not let them. Surround me with your enchantments—lay this fearful spirit. Nay, if you command me to go upon my hands and knees before Sir Thomas, I shall do so."

" Go to Master Honey's, and when the folk are gathered about ye, stand up and confess your sins. Tell Toby Penrice, before all the people, how you robbed him. Pay your servants the wages due to them. Go to Master Clabar and give him back his home."

" These things I cannot do ; but I shall at least live honestly."

" Too late," cried the witch, going towards her hovel.

" Mammy ! Is there no more treasure hid upon this moor ? "

" What would you do with treasure ? "

" I would pay my debts—and help a few poor widows."

" You would keep all, and spend all on yourself. I'll have no more words with ye, lest I be cursed. But I'll have ye to know 'tis an ill deed to cheat a witch. 'Tis our last meeting, Master Grambla. Get you gone, wrecker and robber—and forget John and Cherry Clabar if you can."

Jacob went, stumbling over the rocks ; while Mother

Gothal, with many a chuckle of delight, dipped her arm into the spring and drew out a little dark oil painting which, like its companion picture, had been made by Lady Just, to fit an occasion such as this. She carried them both into her den ; relighted her fragment of pipe ; then began to prepare for departure, knowing that the time had arrived when it would be necessary to hide herself in the castle of Bezurrel.

"He'll come to-night, or send a gang, to end me ; a few of them what pray wi' him will work for him—but not many, my dear, and next week there'll be none ; folk go shy of a man that's haunted," she said joyously. "Twenty-five years I ha' been a witch and got a living by it ; but I don't know how any one be the worse for what I've said and done. And soon I'll live in a cottage wi' two floors, my dear. And I'll learn to read the Bible, which be full o' the bravest witchery in the world. And I'll wear my silk gown, and dance at two more weddings—ay, and I'll cut my beard off first. And if I don't drink a bottle at each wedding—la, my dear, two bottles—may I be pinched for it."

Cherry, an hour later, saw the meagre figure of Jacob from a window of Halcyon ; and in a calm voice called Clabar from his scribbling. Together they watched the man who walked so lifelessly.

"Now our enemy comes at last. He opens the forbidden pathway when it is too late," she said.

"Do not abuse him," begged the fearful Clabar.

"I shall not lay a finger on him. He is whipped enough."

Then she opened the door ; and, seeing her, Jacob smiled and tried to amble at his ease along the pathway.

"Friends ! " he began. "You wonder why I have so long delayed to visit ye. Ah, John Clabar ! these be old times again. The office was never the same when you had departed. I missed my friend and counsellor. Ah, John, I would fortune had permitted you to stay with me."

"I remember you did not encourage me to stay," said Clabar.

"Ill times, neighbour. I could not afford a clerk; and, as you know, I engaged no other. Clabars and Gramblas have always been good friends. I loved your father——"

"Is it your way to express love by depriving friends of property, and by driving them from their homes?" asked Cherry.

"Young gentleman, you and I are about to become acquainted," said Jacob suavely. "Your grandfather sold me Coinagehall, though I was ill disposed to take it; but a poor man, gentlemen—a mere attorney—must get what he can. As for the other affair—which was indeed unfortunate—I was the tool played with, the *corpus vile* experimented upon—I have no great strength of mind, John, as you very well know—the pliant wand was I, so to speak, of the rogue Toby, who harboured every feeling of resentment against thee, friend John, knowing you had caught him once with a sackful of hares, and believing it was you that lodged the information which brought him into trouble. Gentleman, I am a dupe, a fool—I was intended for the life of idle squire. I have been in good truth an idiot at these conveyances, mortgages, investments, and the like. Preaching, praying, that I might have done. Ay, I could have made a curate. I was trustee for Toby—a deep rascal, I promise you; that simplicity of his, it will not do—I invested the sum in the South Sea Company, and it went with my own small savings; all was caught away in that damnable whirlpool. Toby would not spare me unless I gave him your cottage, John—ay, and would have me get you out of Moyle to boot. For, said he, this Clabar, by some cunning of the pen, by some clerkly trick, has signed away my fortune. The two families could never agree; for Clabars have been always honest, while Penrices were ever rogues and poachers. Eh, John, 'twas a happy

day for me when the excellent Sir Thomas gave you friendship."

"You have a pretty trick of pleading," said Cherry.

"I do not plead, young sir; I state my case. Truth may demand a statement, but does not need a lawyer."

"Then why do you visit us?"

"As a friend and neighbour; nay more, as a benefactor. I grow old; I desire to settle my affairs. Young gentleman, are you not the heir of the Clabars?"

"What if I am?"

"I would see you run the plough across the fields of Coinagehall. A poor house and barren property. Yet I would make you master."

"This is generous. Why should you favour me, and neglect your adopted daughter? And why do you forget John Clabar?"

"That you have a right to know. I have a tale for your ear, but I would not speak it here. Will it please you to accompany me, Master Peter? Will you come with me now to your future home, and permit me to show you the entire property? Nay, if you so desire, I will seal you a deed of gift before the sun goes down."

"I go with you," said Cherry, making a certain sign which Clabar understood; but not a movement escaped the eye of Jacob.

"John shall certainly accompany us. Our deed of business calls for his honest presence," he said glibly.

"I remain here," said Clabar. Then his anger broke loose, and he struck the desk before him as he cried, "I have sworn not to enter my father's house while you remain its master."

"For shame, John! You have forgot your manners—and have spilt your ink," said Jacob.

Clabar watched them out of sight, then left the cottage to run at headlong speed through the wood, and so to Bezurrel. While Jacob and Cherry arrived

presently at Coinagehall, to discover a great silence ; for nobody was to be seen in the garden, where implements lay as they had been dropped, and the door of an empty house stood open.

"Have you not a great number of servants ?" inquired Cherry.

"Rascals who cheated me. I have dismissed them all," replied Jacob. Yet the trick of the voice could not conceal a troubled mind ; for when he had left the house a few servants had remained ; and now these also had abandoned him.

"Answer me plainly," said Cherry, as they entered, "Is it not true that you wish to dispose of this property because it is haunted ?"

"It is indeed haunted," replied Jacob with a laugh. "You shall see footprints form in the dust, and wounded faces pressed against the windows. You shall hear groans and tramlings all the night. But he is a poor creature who fears a spirit. There is one Red Cap—a pleasant knave—who haunts the house perpetually. I am grown so accustomed to the rogue and his impish tricks that I would not willingly be without him. This fellow was once a Clabar, and you must know, young gentleman, that to be a Clabar is to be a rascal."

"Is not that a strange admission ?"

"I hate the Clabars," cried Jacob, pressing both hands against his chest as if he would have forced down his nature.

"Why have you locked the door ?"

"I would have privacy. I will have no interference, whether of man or spirit. Do you fear me, young sir ?"

"With one arm fastened I could whip you round this house. Do you not rather fear me ?"

"I have no cause to fear you, my fine young gentleman."

"We stand alone in this house. There is nobody within sight or hearing. I had sworn before coming to

Moyle that I would beat you soundly for having snatched this property from my father."

"Instead of which you shall learn to love me. I bring you here to claim you—to call you my own Robin."

"Robin!" she exclaimed; then murmured to herself, "The title fits his business."

"You wonder why I dispose of my property to you. Now you shall perceive the deed is natural. You may reproach me for having delayed so long to claim you; but you shall know the motive. Young gentleman, I am your father."

Cherry walked towards the window, that she might hide her face. "Proofs!" she exclaimed. "Not words."

"Proofs you shall have, my son. But first let me say why I was forced to leave you to the care of that whining John Clabar, and at the mercy of the foul wizard, Sir Thomas Just. Old Clabar would sneer at my father; and has cuffed me on the head many a time when I was young. I obtained possession of this property by a trick, if you like. I settled with the father. I paid the son; and by another trick I got possession of his daughter, and I made her serve me as a kitchen wench."

"So you confess to me of your own free will that Ruth is Cherry Clabar."

"While you are Robin Grambla."

"And you are Grambla robbing me of name. Do you desire me to call you father? I know a better tale than that," she cried with so much loathing that Jacob stood dismayed.

"You are my son indeed. And we shall fight our enemies together," he muttered.

"John Clabar, my kind guardian, and Sir Thomas Just, my more than friend."

"He will be your bitterest foe when he learns who is your father."

"Still no proofs ; but methinks much perjury," she said disdainfully.

"Do not vex me, Robin. I have the proofs, and presently shall show them. Here we will live together. You shall be master, and I the servant."

"And build upon the ruins of your fortune !"

"Son, there is something left. This morning I had letters upon business—a property to sell, a sum to invest. I believe, Robin, you could win a purse at the wrestling. And there is money to be got by this new religion. Together we shall make a pretty fortune. But Mother Gothel must be silenced first. And now for proofs."

"They are not needed," she said. "Jacob Grambla, you have made your last throw, and fortune—as a diamond necklace—now defeats you."

"What mean you, Robin ? May I fall dead this instant if you are not my son."

"You are reprieved for a different fate. Do you not hear the knocking on the door ?"

"No mortal knocks. 'Tis the cursed Red Cap !" shouted Jacob. "Stay, Robin ! In pity shield me !"

She had left the room, and now unlocked the door. A moment later she returned with Sir Thomas ; and, standing between her protector and the meagre Grambla, said triumphantly, "My dearest friend and my bitterest enemy meet at last."

CHAPTER VIII

JACOB ARGUES FOR THE LAST TIME

THERE was no man in Moyle parish quite so small as Jacob Grambla ; many a wench was taller, many a boy bigger. He looked then like the dry and shrunk bean-pod hanging by a single stalk of life, the last of its kind, with winter coming on. This pigmy stood and trembled exceedingly, knowing that all the forms of enchantment were likely to be brought against him. He shifted so that a mirror opposite should not reflect his shrivelled misery. Then he took snuff, and spoke :

"Coinagehall is honoured the second time by an uninvited guest. Jester and ghost one day ; priest and magician another. A pretty masquerade in truth ! I have no names for such great gentlemen, and I may be pardoned if I profess no friendship. I do not go to Bezurrel, yet Sir Thomas Just must come to Coinagehall. I know not, sir, by what right you trespass upon my private life."

"Let us not get talking about rights," said Sir Thomas. "Were I to call the people of Moyle and to say, 'Do justice to this man,' I might be led to pity you."

"What brings you, sir ? "

"I come to force truth out of the mouth of a liar."

"He has just declared, Sir Thomas, that I am his son," said Cherry.

"Truth in that form can hardly be a lie ; for such a statement could deceive no man," replied Sir Thomas.

"I am to prove my words," said Jacob. "Sir, there is a law which forbids the interference of a

stranger between father and son. This young gentleman is mine. He is, as you are well aware, no relation of the sour John Clabar. You have no need to scan the stars, nor to search your books, to know this handsome fellow could not be the son of dark and brooding Clabar; and of a lady who, for all her Cornish parentage, was of Spanish blood; being descended from one of the shipwrecked sailors of the great Armada."

"I pray you do not look at your own reflection in the mirror," said Sir Thomas.

"Your insults, sir, proceed from greater strength. My lady was beautiful indeed—she had golden hair. Yet I grieve to add no marriage ceremony took place between us. Therefore this young gentleman is not legitimate. Sir, if I wished to lie, how easy it would be to declare I had been married."

"Why, a most ingenious gentleman!" Sir Thomas muttered.

"This my son, Robin, was born in the parish and town of St. Germans, where as a young man I had some business," Jacob continued. "I waste no breath in telling of my love, my courtship. Death, sir, prevented a more legal union. At an early age, and oppressed by poverty, I found myself the father of a son, whom I dared not own in this church-town of Moyle. For days I fought against paternal tenderness; and at last, defeated by the longings of my soul, I set out for St. Germans, and returned with boldness and my babe. I reached this parish during the great storm which the old and middle-aged still tell of. Hearing signals of distress at sea, and shouts of wreckers on the cliffs, I tied my horse, and descended to the shore, bearing the child Robin tenderly in my arms. I stood there alone, and presently a lady was washed up near my feet. Sir, that instant I perceived how I might save my reputation and secure sympathy for my darling Robin. Finding the lady was dead, I

drenched the clothes of my child, then ascended the cliffs, carrying my son whom I was to present to the people as a child I had rescued from the sea. Thus, sir, the story came about."

"How is it your son came to be Peter Clabar; while the maiden Ruth was known as your adopted daughter?"

"I shall be plain with you. I shall now tell of my deed of vengeance," replied Jacob. "The half of the cruelty of these Clabars to my family will never be made known. Let that pass now; I mention it to justify my action. John Clabar himself had done me no ill—he had the will, but not the power—yet God in heaven knows how his father oppressed my parents. Sir, I could produce you letters in proof of this. John Clabar's wife had lately died, after bearing him a child, which Mother Gothel had the care of. I went to her cottage, having then the idea of bidding her take charge of my little Robin also; but when I arrived she had gone out upon the cliff to join the wreckers, and had left a little maid to watch the child. I sent her out and, to be brief, sir, in my story, I dressed my Robin in the clothes of Cherry, left him in the cot, and carried to Coinagehall John Clabar's infant daughter."

"This portion of your story is true indeed; but I knew it already."

"For Mother Gothel told you. I would remind you, sir, that old baggage lies to every man."

"I discovered it myself. I do not ask your motive in neglecting your son and wrecking your vengeance on the Clabars. Nor do I require you to show me proofs; for I am very well aware this young gentleman, as you are pleased to call him, is no more related to you than he is to the house of Clabar."

"You speak easily, sir; but you cannot kill my claim by talking."

"Why do you now require his services?"

"The affections of a father, sir——"

"Pray do not speak of the affections. You require him because he is strong; and you believe, by this foolish story, you may win his help. But most of all you know I love him. So you would turn him against me, you would force me to despise him, or you dream by this trick to win my support and thus strengthen your hold upon this property."

"You declare Robin is not my son. Ride with me to St. Germans, and I shall there produce evidence of his birth."

"I am not inclined to fall into a trap. Travelling in your company might lead to accidents upon a lonely road. Now let me burst this bubble," said Sir Thomas sharply; then, taking the young lady by the hand, he led her forward and continued, "My child, I shall ask you a few questions in this rogue's hearing. Do you own this Grambla as your father?"

"By heaven, I do not," she answered.

"What was the place of your birth?"

"The Colony of Virginia."

"Are you maid or man?"

"A thousand times a maid."

"What is your Christian name?"

"Elizabeth."

"What madness is this?" shouted Jacob.

"The madness of the truth," replied Sir Thomas.

"A foul trick. Here is more enchantment. Are you indeed a maid?"

"You have heard me say so," answered the stately young Elizabeth.

"Lay down your weapons, Grambla, and pray for pardon."

"Sir, I have no desire to seek your pardon. It is true I have fallen into error—such as a man will make. I have not disclosed the whole of the truth; for a man may tell his story in the way that suits him. This young lady is indeed not related to me, that is to say,

she is not my flesh and blood. Yet I shall claim her as my daughter, and I know well the law of this land must uphold my claim against even a baronet—a most religious Catholic gentleman, who has smuggled into this Protestant country a Jesuit priest which, sir, is against the law.”

“I perceive you have more than one arrow in your quiver,” said Sir Thomas.

“Ay, sir, and here I have a sharp one which shall riddle you. Seek your pardon—a pretty notion! I will have you beg mine before you go. I repeat, sir, I would have strengthened my case by a different arrangement of the facts. The former story carried more weight; yet the plain truth is hardly of less consequence. I may even appear before you in a more honourable light when I declare I have not known a father’s transports. Let us have done with quibbles. To Moyle I published the true story. I saved the life of this young lady as a child; I snatched her from the ocean, and closed her hapless mother’s eyes in death.”

“Then robbed her body.”

“You lie, sir. I used the dead with every possible act of reverence.”

“Yet you failed to discover the necklace.”

“You are playing with me, sir. Will you not find virtue and kindness in any man who is your enemy? Ah, sir, you are bitter in your disappointment. You perceive I make good my claim. You have showered your favours—I know not for what purpose—upon this young lady who is, I believe, of mean birth; and now you are unable to restrain your grief at discovering her daughter of poor Jacob Grambla, and mistress, not of yourself, but of so mean a home as Coinagehall.”

“Your claim. What is it?”

“Why, she is mine by the law of the land, the custom of the country, and tradition of the people. I did not know of her sex. Nor upon that night of

the exchange did I know whether Clabar's child was son or daughter. I gambled with the chance. When I discovered his babe was a daughter, I thought to hear more ; but the child was sent away immediately—a few hours, I believe, after I had played my trick—and I then supposed my babe was also a maid. When Peter Clabar came to Moyle twenty years afterwards, I was indeed amazed ; and then I supposed my exchange had not been discovered, while the people to whom the child was sent knew no better than myself. Sir, I do not possess your powers of divination—and I thank God for it. I am a plain man, duped by Mother Gothel, who I am now well assured knew of this young lady's sex. Sir, you may haunt me with your evil spirits, yet I have you. Here is my adopted daughter. Leave her, sir, and leave my house, and free me for ever from your hateful presence. Come, Sir Thomas, have the goodness to confess that I have beat you."

"Your nimble wit has run away from reason and left memory far behind," replied Sir Thomas. "You have heard me question this young lady ; you have listened to her answers. Can a child a few weeks old know her name and remember her birth-place ? One more question I will put to her. Child, your full name ?"

"Elizabeth Virginia Just," said the young lady proudly.

"Now you are answered. You saved this maiden's life : for that I thank you ; for that I might have loved you ; ay, and for that I am prepared even now to help you. Yet you saved her in order that you might gratify your evil nature by forcing Cherry Clabar, the heiress of this house, to serve in your kitchen ; and how you treated the poor maid I know. You claim this young lady as your adopted daughter. I claim her as my only brother's child."

"Yet more enchantment," Jacob muttered. "This is trickery—foul plotting. You put these answers in her mouth. She is a common creature—ay, daughter

of a Jew, I warrant. So I gave Cherry this one's rightful name of Ruth."

"She is Elizabeth, for the name has become dear in the traditions of my family; and Virginia because she was born in that colony. The Justs were ever wanderers; and my brother, having no taste for life in England, travelled much about the world. Coming to Italy for my wedding, he fell in love with a particular friend of my lady; and as soon as could be married her. They travelled to America, and were so much attracted by the Colony of Virginia that they decided to spend some years among the hardy pioneers. A son was given them, only to be taken away. Then came Elizabeth, but the letter which told me of her birth contained also the news of her father's death. His lady left immediately upon a visit to my father at Bezurrel. The rest you know."

"I have heard another story marvellously like yours," said Jacob bitterly. "I believe, sir, you and a certain vagabond, who came to this house to declare Cherry was his sister, have put your heads together. Nay, I am certain that you sent him here; and you are his confederate in robbing me, and in passing paper money that is false."

"You refer to a poor gentleman whom I now protect. If he robbed you, I am sorry for it," said Sir Thomas coldly. "I did not know of this man until he came to this house and fell in love with Cherry; and even then I had no speech with him. By her wilful action in running with him I was to learn the truth. Had you treated the poor child as a daughter, had you not driven her from this house, I might never have discovered my young lady's name and parentage—so I should have mourned for ever the death of my only niece."

"These are words, sir, wild words; and, I believe, wicked words."

"Then listen again. When my dear brother married,

my lady and I presented to his wife the most costly diamond necklace that our fortunes could procure ; a necklace so splendid as to become the talk of the whole city of Florence. This necklace was worn by my unfortunate sister-in-law when she was washed ashore. You did not discover it, but Mother Gothel removed it from the body, and after many years gave it to Cherry, who sent it to my lady, upon the day she ran with her lover, by the hand of our dear niece. At a glance we recognised it ; nor could we have failed to do so, for the crest of the Justs is cunningly stamped upon each link. Are you answered ? ”

“ I am content,” said the meagre attorney, rubbing his dry hands together slowly. “ I believe I must forgo my claim, for I perceive you carry facts too weighty. Sir, may I ask you to withdraw ? I wish this young lady every happiness. I am engaged, sir, for a prayer-meeting at Master Honey’s. So I lost the necklace ! I had a fortune beneath my hands, and could not find it. I saved this young lady for your happiness. I have played into your hands at every move. Well, God be praised for it. I have done good ; have saved life and made folk happy. I thank God for it. Permit me, sir, to attend you to the door.”

“ Stay, Grambla,” said Sir Thomas, stepping towards the shrivelled manikin. “ It is my purpose to reward you—upon conditions—for you have unwittingly done a great service to my house. Ay, though you worked with ill-intent, you have yet done good. I shall present you with five thousand pounds ; while you shall agree, upon receiving that sum, to restore this property to John Clabar, then to leave Moyle, never to revisit the western side of Tamar.”

“ Five thousand pounds—I came into that sum before,” said Jacob harshly. “ A year of life, of fine furniture and servants and routs—a year of false friendship. Nothing more. Again I am content. Sir, I bow before you, I thank you for your kindness.

But, sir, will you not rather withdraw your enchantments from me, and command your spirits to cease from troubling me ? Can you not see misery upon my face—misery too great for one small man to bear ? I have done evil, sir. 'Tis true I have cheated and robbed, but I have done no murder ; I have led no wench astray, for all my talk ; I have been exact in my religious duties. Sir, I am poor now, and crushed, my friends are gone from me ; and the years go with me downwards, sir, downwards. I can face men, not spirits. I have a great weakness, a great terror, for these figures and fancies. Sir, I grow strange in my mind when I behold this apparition. I take a knife, yet fear to use it. Lack of reason may remove this terror ; and, sir, you may not wish in time to come to have even my death upon your soul."

"Enough, Grambla ! You are free from this hour," said Sir Thomas in a pitying voice ; while Elizabeth, who had done with the masculine sex and name of Cherry, was astonished to discover a haze upon her eyes.

CHAPTER IX

ONLY JOHN CLABAR IS UNHAPPY

"FAREWELL to the woods ! Farewell to John Clabar ! But not farewell to Halcyon ! " sighed the young lady. " I gain the whole world, yet lose a devoted father. When did you first suspect, dear uncle, I was no Clabar ? "

" When I set eyes upon you. Golden-haired maidens are not born to the swarthy. Damsels of learning and keen wit do not spring from yeoman stock. Neither do infants in their cradles alter the colour of their eyes ! And more, your face and figure, your religion, your fine spirit of freedom, the very carriage of your head, reminded me of my dear brother. Now you understand why I have always loved and protected you ; and why I desire you for my elder son."

" Poor Cherry-Ruth ! How she will grieve to lose her diamonds ! "

" If I am not mistaken, she will rest content with a father, home, and husband."

" If they do not satisfy her, with liberty also to pray in her own queer fashion, I shall call her peevish. Here comes David ! Will he stoop to kiss his cousin's hand ? "

" Ah, child ! I would have seen him with the right to kiss your lips."

" David and I are warm friends ; but we should have made cold lovers. Let this soreness heal. Dear uncle, you must take me, naughtiness and all."

The elder son approached along the avenue, leading a horse ; and was now almost up with them.

"I shall inform David this evening you are his cousin—not now, Betty," said Sir Thomas.

"Ho, Peter!" cried the young man pleasantly.

"My name is not Peter, young gentleman."

"Ho, Mistress Cherry!" cried he.

"Neither is that my name."

"Then I am done."

"What, an't you got my name yet?" she asked, laughing. "You know the old folk-tale, my young gentleman?"

"I was brought up on it," he said. Then, bowing and pointing at her, he sang, "Nimmy, nimmy, not, your name is Tom-Tit-Tot."

"Now I should scream, and fly away, and be seen no more. But I'll stay to plague you."

"Where are you going, David?" asked his father.

"Ten miles along the high road, sir. I have made a calculation which tells me my brother should reach the other side of the downs in two hours' time. His horses are making the dust fly, I warrant."

"What is this?" Elizabeth murmured, with a decided change of countenance.

"There was a quarrel between us when we parted," David continued. "I have a debt of honour to discharge; so, with your consent, sir, I shall meet the rogue in a lonely place, and maybe pull his ears."

"If you do so, I shall never speak with you again," cried the young lady.

"Ho, ho, Mrs. Tom-Tit-Tot! Now we know which way the wind blows. I shall beat Martin—ay, soundly, I promise you. I shall bruise him from head to foot. And then I shall force him to his knees and compel him to kiss my boots."

"Sir Thomas, you cannot permit this!"

"Go, David, and whip the young rascal. I believe a little of your rough handling will do him no harm."

"If he does so . . ." began Elizabeth.

" Young lady, what is this to do with you ? " asked David.

" Oh, nothing whatever, I assure you. Yet it must be hateful to me to see two brothers fighting."

" You will not see it ; for I shall beat him upon a lonely road. I would not trust you to hold the sponge, young lady."

David sprang upon the horse and rode away ; while the others went on towards the castle.

" Uncle, you have sent for Martin ! "

" It was your wish, child."

" I did not express it."

" Dear child, you write, you sigh, you look ; then declare you do not speak."

" But David and Martin are enemies."

" They are brothers first. Let them settle their differences. Betty, my child, David is the man of the two. He has more roughness than Martin, but twice the heart. Come ! my lady is waiting to embrace you, and to find you a gown for this evening's wear ; for after to-day you are to resign yourself to the imprisonment of skirts, with all the vanities they imply. Now I will send for John Clabar. He must dine with us this afternoon, hear himself deprived of Goldilocks, and receive a black-eyed compensation."

They entered the castle, while David was riding in his headlong fashion across the upland. Reaching a place where four roads met, some ten miles out of Moyle—a lonely spot with a gallows in full view—he leapt from his horse, and permitted the animal to graze while he watched the eastward road. His time of waiting was short, for a cloud of dust whirled across the lowland, and presently a post-chaise dashed towards the moor.

" Brother," said David, " you have fed your horses upon something more substantial than wind, though it makes them go as fast."

" I did not look to find you here, David."

"There is a matter to be settled between us. Better here than at home. Come with me a few steps along this road."

They walked side by side in perfect silence round the bend, and stopped in a lonely place where the hills of the moorland rose upon either side.

"Here is a fine turf," said David. "A clear sky above, no shadow of tree, not a human being as witness. Brother, you did your best to rouse the devil in me. You insulted me. You would have killed me, I think."

"Under the same circumstances I should insult you again," said Martin sullenly. "Do you require satisfaction, David?"

"Ay, brother, I must have satisfaction. Tell me now, do you know why my father sends for you?"

"I do not know. He ordered me to return at once."

"Well, brother, we are to fight for a young lady. But did you never ask yourself whether I loved her, or she loved me?"

"I suppose you love her. I know she had little affection for me—that knowledge made me mad."

"What affection could you look for, brother, after you had knocked her senseless?"

"She showed me more harshness than I deserved," Martin continued. "Then my father forbade me to speak with her; and told me he desired you to marry her. As if that was not sufficient, you must play the lord and use me like a hind."

"Nay, brother, when did I do so?"

"When we met in Bezurrel Woods, and you told me I was out of bounds."

"I was but obeying my father. Come, brother, let me inform you the young lady has far more affection for you than for myself. She has some character to prefer a younger son, and miss a title."

"You bring me here to take your vengeance," cried

Martin, throwing his hat upon the turf. "You taunt me by saying she has some affection for me; when my father bids her marry you, and she, I know, is willing to obey. I perceive now I have been brought here by a trick. This is your doing, David. You forged my father's hand; you issued the order in his name. Well, he shall know of it."

"Put up your sword, brother," said David quietly.

"You have said too much. Protect yourself! By heaven, I shall do my best to kill you."

"Hothead to the last. Listen, brother! I would not taunt you, for I know you cannot bear it. My father has sent for you indeed; and I am come to welcome you home, offer you my hand, and wish you joy. Stand back, brother, for I am stronger and more skilful than yourself—we have settled that matter in our friendly contests. I am not to marry the young lady whom we have known as John Clabar's daughter."

"David," cried Martin hoarsely. "Will you swear you do not play with me?"

"I do not play with any man—least of all with my tempestuous brother—upon such a matter as this. Cherry likes me well enough, and for my part I am devoted to her; but we are both agreed that our hearts would not run well in harness. I am not learned enough for my lady; while she has too much literature for me. She is for Greek and Latin, while I am for horse and dog. I have also no desire to find myself united to a lady who is well able to throw me in a thorn-bush should I displease her. Give me, brother, a timid and shrinking miss, who writes a pretty letter of ill-spelt words, and sighs upon a moral tale; whose weakness it would be my pleasure to protect."

"What does my father say?"

"Little enough. He frowns and strokes his chin; while our young Mrs. Mystery uses him like a figure of wax and melts him into whatever shape may suit her

fancy. She has taken a liking for you, brother, and has pressed my father to bring you home ; and that's the end of it."

" But, brother," said Martin shamefacedly, while he bent to regain his hat. " Why did you not speak before ? Why, when I insulted you, would you not confess you were not in love with Cherry ? "

" That's a simple question, brother," replied David. " I was prepared to obey my father—who was uncommonly set upon this marriage—if I discovered the young lady was also willing, as indeed she then appeared to be. When you came like a roaring lion into my preserve, I had to check you ; for I could not permit you to play the elder son and encroach upon my privileges ; nor could I have avoided fighting with you had not my father interfered. Yet, brother, I would rather appear to play the coward than shed your blood."

" You ride out here to speak so kindly, to offer me your hand, to bring me happiness ! Is this, brother, your revenge ? "

" Nay, brother, I think you must give me some satisfaction."

" I am sorry I insulted the best brother in the world. Your nature is far nobler than mine."

" I believe we possess the same nature ; but I have the trick of controlling mine, while you are apt to let yours run."

" Humiliate me, brother," begged Martin in a low voice.

" By heaven, brother, I will," cried David. " God knows ~~you~~ brother is the best friend a man can have. Still you insulted me, the heir of the house, and that matter must be settled. Put up your hands ! "

Martin did so with eagerness ; while David stepped forward and struck his brother lightly on the breast.

" I am satisfied," he said. " Now, brother, I'll race your horses to Bezurrel."

Dinner was put back that evening to await the brothers. When the chaise drew up, Sir Thomas and his lady descended the steps to welcome their younger son ; who, immediately he was alone with his father, began to flow with penitential words.

"Ay, Martin, it is easy to repent of sins when we intend to persevere in them," said Sir Thomas ; yet in a kindly fashion.

"I do repent of my disobedience, sir ; but I could not conquer my desires."

"It is also easy to repent when we have obtained our desires. But, my son, I desire you to show more firmness, and learn to rule your temper. Should you marry—as I think is likely—I hope you will choose a lady strong enough to manage you—ay, and it is my earnest hope she whips you sometimes. I believe David has told you what has happened in your absence. Therefore I shall not weary you by repetition. Let me say this—without unkindness—I am glad you are not my elder son."

"I know, sir, that David is far more worthy to succeed you than I am," said Martin humbly.

"That is the best thing I have ever heard you say. In this matter of your possible marriage," said Sir Thomas, with a slight caressing movement of his hands, "I give you free liberty of choice, and from this moment withdraw my former prohibition. Should you have the fortune to win a young lady a thousand times too good for you—and you may by chance have heard of such an one—your tour abroad shall also be your honeymoon. Your mother and I would be pleased to accompany a newly married couple to our home in Italy. And now, Martin, you may step into the gallery of statues, where I trust you may find a figure to your liking. Be careful not to upset the Cupid at the door !"

The gallery lay upon the east side of the castle, where it grew dark early ; so that Martin, upon

opening the door, was not surprised to see a glimmer of candlelight flickering across the statues. Somebody was reading or moulding at the further end. Martin beheld the Cupid extending towards him two baby arms of welcome, and smiled at his father's conceit in warning him ; smiled also at his own thoughts, declaring David to be the best fellow in the world, and he himself the happiest ; but wondered a little—hardly daring to hope for the best—when he could not distinguish the human form beyond for statues.

"The Figure of Youth," he murmured. "Yet I know that shabby suit of brown."

Advancing quietly, he had a full view of the young lady, whom he regarded as Cherry, still in her boy's clothes, standing with her back towards him, holding a wax candle in one hand and a portrait in the other. Looking round, she instantly blew out the candle and hid the picture. Yet the gallery was not dark.

"Cherry ! " he cried. "I am returned."

"No wiser than you went," she said. "You are like the good people of Moyle, who will declare, 'It is fine,' or 'It is wet,' as if they suppose you are not able to discover such things for yourself."

"Are you not pleased to see me ? "

"I have now stepped among such a company of relations, I may hardly require another."

"My father sent for me."

"Well, I did not, my gone yesterday and here to-day young gentleman. Why are you not on the way to France ? "

"I am free—the barriers are down. I may step across into your territory. Sir Thomas gives his consent."

"Permits you to walk in my garden ! I'll see to that. Begone, trespasser ! "

"I shall not go."

"Then I will set traps."

"If I am caught, you must come to take me out."

"Not I ! There you shall remain, young gentleman."

"What was that picture you hid away ?"

"This young man is tyrant, father confessor, lord chief justice, lover, and I know not what," she said with teasing laughter. "He must know all. He must get into my mind, and pick my brain, and dissect my heart ; and if I please myself with the smallest idle fancy he will get at it. Why did you not go upon the Continent and leave us all at peace ?"

"Yes, Cherry, I must know all. I am jealous of every thought which passes through your mind unless I cause it. Cherry, no more words. Be serious now, I beg. You know I love you. You know I am returned to fall at your feet——"

"Yet he has not done so."

"And offer you my life and fortune. Cherry, answer !"

"A dictator now ! Truly the lover ascends rapidly."

"Cherry, you may tease me ever afterwards."

"At last a concession, a privilege ! I'll plague you, Martin ! If that is all you want, I'll see to it. I perceive well enough there can be no peace until I give you my hand, and hang my chains upon you, and lead you about as my dancing bear. Come, Martin ! Take me before I run. And here's my hand. I am ashamed of the brown, but the coming life will tend to whiten it."

"My sweetheart, you love me !"

"Yes, Martin, I am yours. And now there need be no false modesty between us, I will show you what it was I held when you most rudely broke upon me."

She drew Martin to the window, and there produced a miniature of himself which Lady Just had painted. Perhaps the mother had flattered her younger son a trifle.

"My lady gave me the choice between two pictures ; and I took yours. Sir Thomas would not give me the

choice ; so I made the selection for myself. You fought with me, Martin, and beat me ; and now I take revenge, even as I said I would, by bringing you to my feet. I am growing weary of playing the strong man ; and indeed my strength is leaving me. So from this hour I abandon boy's clothes, and resign myself to the protection of your arm. But one word more, young gentleman ! Would you, a Just, marry a Cornish yeoman's daughter ? "

" With the greatest happiness in the world."

" Happiness ! That is the word I wanted you to utter. It is the best word in this lovely green world. Well, you shall have your yeoman's daughter ; and should she turn out to be a princess in disguise I believe you will not love her less."

" Come, children ! " called my lady in a laughing voice from the far end of the gallery. " Your world is not entirely uninhabited. There is also dinner ! "

They ran to her with the lightness of birds, and the young lady was hurried away to make the first great toilette of her life. But in the meantime there was no sign of Clabar. Sir Thomas had written a letter, inviting him to Bezurrel and, knowing him to be a plain man who might have been greatly disconcerted at learning the truth suddenly amid company, he had stated plainly that the young lady whom he loved so well was not his daughter ; but Sir Thomas neglected to add that the daughter lived, and was none other than Grambla's former kitchen wench—to whom Clabar had never exhibited any mark of friendship—as he desired to discover that great secret to his guest in private ; Sir Thomas having a weakness for dramatic moments.

Still Clabar did not arrive, and at last the servant returned with a letter written in the clerk's neat handwriting. The unhappy man—for so he styled himself—thanked Sir Thomas for an invitation to festivities which he himself could take no part in ; nor did he

forget to repeat his gratitude for the great kindness shown, and the protection afforded, him in the past. But it appeared that the baronet's motive was not disinterested. "The kindness shown to me," he wrote, "was but the reflection of your love for the perfect maid whom I still claim as my daughter. You took charge of my small sum of money, you provided me with a home for which you would take no rent, you have saved me from the enemy of my family ; not for my sake, sir, but because I happened to possess a peerless daughter. And now you would take her from me, by declaring she is a Just and your niece. You claim her as your own. Sir, will you consider how impossible this must sound to me? You leave me destitute and miserable. You would restore me house and land, yet take away all that makes life good. Sir, I cannot sit at your table, for I am no longer able to regard you as a friend."

"Poor John! I am sorry indeed he shows this spirit," Sir Thomas murmured as he closed the letter. "It is too late to send again. In the morning I shall go to him with Cherry."

Then he hurried away to the drawing-room and called his sons. When they had joined him he ordered a servant to inform my lady that dinner was served.

"Watch yonder door, my sons. We have prepared a great surprise for you," he said in his most genial manner. "It will be to you, David, a pleasure merely ; though under different circumstances it would have been something more. To you, my happy Martin, it must come like a shower of gold."

"I ask for no more fortune, sir," cried Martin.

"Then you shall receive what you neither ask for nor deserve. I hear the ladies. Your eyes upon the door, my sons!"

It opened as he spoke ; and there stood my lady, beautiful still in spite of the grey hair trespassing among the black ; but outshone by the dazzling young lady

at her side, with her golden curls and glorious complexion. She was dressed in white, and the famous diamonds flashed upon her neck.

"Pray do not speak, Sir Thomas," cried my lady. "This is my part, and I claim the right to play it. David and Martin I present you to your cousin, daughter of your uncle and my dearest friend—Mistress Elizabeth Virginia Just."

"Cherry no longer," whispered the happy girl, running to Martin's side. "Betty to you, my love!"

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT FIRE AND WHAT FOLLOWED

No sleep soothed Clabar before midnight, and afterwards it came with little kindness, mingled with waking fancies which appeared to walk with human feet about the cottage. At last a stone struck the window ; and a harsh voice called :

" Mr. Clabar, I have a message for you. Sir, I have a word for your wise ear."

The night was dark and dry ; but a fine breeze swept from moor to sea.

" Who are you ? " cried Clabar, when he had pushed back the casement.

" Toby Penrice at your service. I would have you to dress and walk out into the open."

" What is your meaning ? And why do you prow round my cottage at this hour when honest folk are abed ? What message do you bring, Toby ? "

" Why, sir, I would as lief talk with you as with any man I know of," replied the simpleton. " I would have you know Creature answered me with yea this last evening. In the morning she had answered with nay ; and it is my belief she has grown so weary of answering the same question, she will now take me to save more talking."

" Have you aroused me that I may listen to your nonsense ? "

" Do you flatter my good sense, sir ? I am got a trifle hard of hearing since I took to work. I have bought a fishing-boat, and hope soon to pay for it.

Sir, I am doing good and living honestly. I put out my net yesterday and drew to shore as pretty a draught of fishes, both small and great, as has been taken since the great miracle. I believe it was the sight of great and little fishes that led Creature to answer me with yea ; for, sir, she is a wench who has a mighty taste for fishes broiled."

"Get you home, Toby. Do you trespass in this fashion again, I set the tithing-man upon your heels."

"One word, sir. I had almost forgot my errand. The truth of the matter is—to come to the point without delay, sir—the Castle of Bezurrel is afire ; and you and I are the only two honest gentlemen in Moyle who be not present at the burning. Step outside and you shall see the sky all bloody from these woods to Great Gwentor."

Then Clabar cried out indeed and, seized by a sudden suspicion, he demanded, "Why do you come here ?"

"When I discover that Bezurrel is afire, I think it but neighbourly to visit your pretty cottage, sir ; lest that might also be afire. And if it was afire I, sir, proposed to warn you ; and thus, sir, I might save your life."

"Why, Toby, I smell burning !"

"'Tis very likely, sir. Now you will perceive I have reasoned this matter mighty well ; for, to speak in the direct manner, sir, your thatch is burning merrily."

Before Clabar could snatch his clothing and descend the stairs, Toby had departed ; and a few minutes later flames were raging in the roof. Huddling on his garments, the lonely man worked his hardest to drag the few pieces of furniture, with his books and heir-looms, into the open ; for the cottage was doomed, and the approach to the bedrooms was already closed. The sky was now awful, and it seemed to Clabar he

could hear the roaring of the immense bonfire in Bezurrel park, which was to provide matter for Cornish folk to tell of a hundred years afterwards.

Indeed, so stupendous was the spectacle that the homeless man gasped when he reached the outer garden, where the entire population of Moyle was assembled ; each man—and each woman too—having worked nobly to snatch a little from the mighty wreck. All faces were black and streaming with perspiration ; while all eyes stared in wonder at the flaming castle.

“ No life lost ; even the horses are brought from their stables and the dogs from their kennels,” said the bustling curate.

“ Surely the devil has been abroad to-night ; for my cottage has also been consumed,” replied John Clabar.

“ Nay, friend, the devil can but supply the brimstone. He leaves it to mortal hands to add the spark and tinder,” quoth the curate wisely.

“ Where are the ladies ? ” asked Clabar ; though he had but one face before him.

“ Gone into the town to take shelter at the inn.”

That moment the crowd surged together, for it was seen Sir Thomas approached, grimy, half-dressed, and wigless. He raised himself by standing on a gate, and addressed the people, his figure illuminated by the great light of the fire, which roared so terribly that he was forced to shout his message :

“ Men and women of Moyle, I thank you for the sympathy expressed to me and to my family by your presence, and by the very notable assistance you have rendered. Much is lost, yet nothing of the highest value ; for not the meanest servant has received a hurt ; and all that yonder flames consume may be replaced. The castle was old, and to my mind so little convenient that I had thought of having it destroyed, and building

in its stead a Gothic mansion nearer to the sea. What I have contemplated is now become necessary by this fire which, I believe, was caused neither by accident nor yet by Act of God."

"Sir Thomas!" cried the busy curate, pressing forward. "Halcyon Cottage has also been burnt to the ground. You may for yourself behold the glow upon the woods."

"I thank you for the information," replied Sir Thomas. "My good people, I desire you now to go quietly to your homes; but first I shall inform you what has happened this night. My home, and Clabar's cottage in the woodland, have been fired, and are now destroyed, as an act of despairing vengeance by the man who has poisoned the life of Moyle these thirty years. I do not utter his name—I perceive you know it well—but with you I rejoice that he will not be seen again, unless he is brought here by the constables. And that I do not wish to happen; for I would have no parishioner sentenced to the gallows on my account."

Sir Thomas descended from the gate and made his way along the avenue accompanied by both his sons; while the people stayed on to watch the burning—since it was too late for bed and too soon to work—many of them wagging their heads over the failure of Sir Thomas to subdue the flames, and venturing to regard him as no very great enchanter after all.

"My master bade me search for you among the crowd, and to tell you he goes to Coinagehall and desired you to follow him," said one of the grooms; and Clabar, compelled by his homeless state to be obedient, went in that direction, walking some distance behind the three figures barely visible in the cold mist of an autumnal dawn.

They waited for him beside the shrubbery, where he and strong Peter had hidden from his own daughter and her lover when they had masqueraded as his

ancestors ; and Sir Thomas stepped forward with outstretched hand to say, " Honest John, I beg you to take possession of your father's house. Will you be pleased to invite my family to take shelter for a time beneath your roof ? "

" You know very well, sir, I can refuse you nothing," replied Clabar ; adding in his dogged fashion, " though you have stole my daughter from me."

" I take what is mine ; and shall restore what is yours," said Sir Thomas sharply.

" The door is not fastened, sir," called David.

" Ay, the rascal has flown, and none of us are likely to set eyes on him again. John Clabar, lead the way—and welcome us."

" I pray you enter, gentlemen ; though, to speak plainly, I feel myself a stranger here," said Clabar glumly.

They groped their way into the house, which was silent, as it had been in days gone by when Cherry under the name of Ruth had toiled in the kitchen with the clock for her companion. They entered the principal room ; threw back the shutters to admit the glow from Bezurrel and the first light of day ; and immediately Sir Thomas perceived two documents upon the centre table. He carried them to the window, while the others gathered round him.

" So," he muttered. " Coinagehall is indeed that rascal's property. This is a deed of sale, signed by your father, John, conveying the whole estate to Grambla."

" My father's hand ! This is indeed no forgery. Yet he swore to me a hundred times he had not signed."

" How his signature was obtained we are not to know."

" It was by fraud, sir—my father was a simple man. Now I shall take it upon myself to destroy this parchment."

"One moment! Here is the scoundrel's will. He bequeaths the house and property of Coinagehall to Honey the barber-surgeon and Toby Penrice gentleman, to be held by them as trustees, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*—let us hope the rascal could not translate his Latin—for the benefit of the new religion, which he has the kindness to wish may destroy the established Church and confound the last papist in the land. The property is not to be sold, but may be let to any decent gentleman, with the exception of Sir Thomas Just and John Clabar, or any person related to them in any way whatsoever; for these, states the will, cannot be worthy. The furniture and all fittings are to be sold by public auction."

"Destroy that paper, sir," cried Clabar.

"Nay, we must do all things honestly. Honey the barber and Penrice the gentleman will know of its existence. I will hand to them this document, and invite them to act in any way that pleases them."

"Then, sir, I lose all."

"We may not prove in a court of law how the deed from your father was got by cunning; therefore take this parchment, John, and do with it as you will. Its destruction must lie upon your conscience. As for the furniture and fittings of this house, they are mine. Grambla indeed bought them, but I have paid for all."

"Sir," muttered Clabar, "I should feel greater astonishment if I did not know you are a wizard."

"I shall produce a witness in proof of this," Sir Thomas continued. "Yet no witness will be needed; for indeed this will is worthless. In the first place we must have evidence of Grambla's death, and that may not easily be obtained; for owing to his deed this night he has become an outlaw. Glance at this parchment and out of your legal knowledge inform me why

it is no lawyer is able to complete his own will ; though he may show great skill in preparing the testaments of his clients."

"I perceive, sir, there are no signatures."

"So agitated was the mind of the man, so set was he upon some act of vengeance, so determined was he to outwit us all, that memory failed, and he forgot to sign his will or to call his witnesses. I now congratulate you, Squire Clabar, upon complete possession of your father's house."

"I thank you," said the clerk. "But, sir, I cannot occupy this house without my daughter."

"You shall have your daughter, I swear," said Sir Thomas with a laugh. "Come, my sons, let us to breakfast at the inn. Will you accompany us, Squire?"

"I shall remain. Now that I have set foot in my own house, I am not to be drawn out of it," replied Clabar.

By midday Bezurrel Castle lay in ruins, and a heap of smouldering ashes marked the site of Halcyon ; while neither man nor woman in all Moyle toiled that day save with their tongues. A full flood of life surged into Coinagehall, overflowing every chamber, filling stables and outbuildings, crowding the loft where Cay had slept. The old house found itself alive again and laughed. Nobody had gained except one man ; all had lost much except that one. Yet he alone walked heavily because his daughter was now a fine lady and did not speak with him.

The true daughter of the house was thinking far more about lover than father, whom she had not approached, partly out of nervousness, chiefly because in the general bustle opportunity had been lacking. It was a grievance that Harry might be walking behind the plough ; for although she liked to think of him at honest work, it was a pain to know he was not walking at her side. So she approached her busy patron and

implored him to send a messenger informing Harry he might now proceed to Moyle.

"Come with me," he answered ; and led her towards Elizabeth, who talked with Mother Gothall.

"Young ladies, make your peace. Then go to the master and reveal yourselves," he ordered.

"I ha' told Squire," said Mother Gothall. "I found 'en walking in the garden, more like a gentleman what had lost a fortune than one who has got back his home. I told 'en how Master Grambla changed the babes, and how Miss Cherry is your niece, and Ruth is Miss Cherry, and how there warn't no Ruth at all ; and I got so mixed up wi' all the names that I made a proper tale of it."

"How does he take it ? "

"Swears, your honour. Calls me a liar, and says if 'tis true he don't believe it, and there must be witchery in it."

"Go to him, young lady, and do your best to make him happy. The poor gentleman has suffered much," said Sir Thomas as he left them.

"So I must call you Cherry," said Elizabeth, taking the dark girl's hands. "That name makes you my sister. I am sorry, dear girl, I was rough with you when you tended my mother's grave. But neither of us knew ! "

"I am so jealous of your diamonds ! "

"A father is better."

"He is a stranger—and I had great love for the diamonds."

"'Tis an ungrateful heart you have, young lady," cried Mother Gothall. "I kept the necklace for years, but I never got to love it."

"I am not ungrateful, Mother Gothall ; but yesterday I was a fortune, and to-day I have nothing—and poor Harry will be disappointed ! And he is twenty miles away—and Sir Thomas will not promise me to send a messenger."

"Mr. Martin Just and I will ride for him, and bring him back with us this evening," promised Elizabeth.

"Then I will forget the diamonds," said Miss Clabar.

They went through the garden and, discovering the master wandering between the fantastic figures in yew and box, Elizabeth went ahead of her companions to meet him.

"Father no longer," she said. "Yet always a second father in my love. I know how good and gentle you have been; I remember how patiently you copied for me. That kindness and tenderness you will now bestow upon your lawful daughter. I do not leave you willingly; I would not part from you if any doubt remained. But I am beyond all question niece of Sir Thomas; while this dark maid waiting is in truth your Cherry. I must not deprive her, nor may I accept what I have no right to claim."

"I cannot exchange a cherry for a sloe," Clabar muttered; but somewhat awkwardly, for this young lady was now so clearly his superior.

"The sloe is of your own growing; while the cherry hangs in your neighbour's orchard."

"It has flowered and ripened in my garden."

"That was by chance. There are two sorts of cherry, foster-father—the one golden-red, the other black. And the black, they say, is sweeter."

"I would to God that necklace had been lost!" cried Clabar.

"For shame, Squire Clabar!" croaked Mother Gothel, hurrying forward. "If they shiny stones had been lost, you would never ha' come home to Coinage-hall. And Grambla would ha' took this maid and kept her for his own. I ask your pardon, young mistress, for being so familiar," she added, dropping a curtsy to the fair Elizabeth; who said at once, "You cannot offend me, Mother Gothel. You have ended

the storm of long ago and solved the riddle of the shipwreck."

Then she took the black Cherry by the hand, and led her to Clabar, saying, "Be as kind to her as you have been to me; then, when I come to Moyle, and am alone with you, I whisper to you, 'father.'"

"So, child," said the moody Clabar, "I am now to discover in you a likeness to your mother; but in faith I cannot. You are dark, and so was she; you are small, and so was she. But there ends the resemblance."

"La, Squire, I can see the likeness plainly," declared Mother Gothel.

"I believe you have deceived me," cried Clabar sharply. "I believe you are no better than a wicked old woman. Why did you not tell me of this?"

"A witch must needs be artful," said cunning Mother Gothel.

"Well, child, it appears you are indeed my daughter; and many must have thought me mad that I should claim relationship with this young lady," continued Clabar. "I shall learn to love you, and if the name of Cherry does not come easily to my tongue I must ask you to be patient."

"For my part, sir, I shall promise to love you, when you have given me permission to wed my Harry; who, I do assure you, sir, is the best man in the world," the girl answered.

"That will come—like all else. Nay, you shall not force me. The world is new to-day, and it seems to me full of crosses. I will take a turn through the fields to set my mind at ease."

He kissed the maid quickly, bowed to Elizabeth in a lingering fashion, frowned upon Mother Gothel; then went away into the fields with his eyes upon the grass.

True to her promise, Elizabeth rode with Martin to the farm where Cay was apprenticed to agriculture,

and brought him back to Coinagehall. The faithful Harry went to his young lady, whom he declared should never be known to him by any other name than Ruth—which he loved, though Grambla had bestowed it—and the two were not quickly seen again. Elizabeth, tired and dusty, entered the house; and, finding Sir Thomas and my lady, had just begun to tell how in five hours they had covered forty miles, when a servant inquired whether Jimmy Twitcher might speak for a moment with the master.

“Let him come,” replied Sir Thomas; and immediately a comical little man strutted into the room and bowed profoundly.

“Well, my giant! What is your desire?” asked Sir Thomas.

“I am come, your honour, to ask permission to depart. I believe you will not require my services again.”

“That is very true, Jimmy. I fear you are grown tired of country life.”

“I cannot deny, sir, that I am more at home in London,” replied the dwarf. “The country, saving your honour’s presence, is for birds and such-like cattle. A man is for the bustle of the street, the coffee-house, the place of pleasure. I would not exchange Drury Lane, sir, for the whole of Cornwall.”

“So, Jimmy, you consider yourself a man.”

“I do, indeed, your honour, and I shall now proceed to prove it. I have a tall and stately wench awaiting me at the village of Islington, and she is sworn to mate with me when I return. Sir, I hear so much talk of marriages impending, that my manhood is fired to do likewise. So with your permission I shall depart for home to-morrow.”

“You may go, Jimmy. My steward shall settle with you immediately.”

“I humbly thank you, sir. Will it please your honour that I entertain the company after dinner

with a few songs, sir, and some playing in burlesque ? ”

“ You may certainly do so,” replied Sir Thomas ; and the dwarf, having bowed again, departed.

“ I saw this strange fellow at Bezurrel,” said Elizabeth. “ But when I asked questions about him you threatened to pull my ears.”

“ Jimmy Twitcher is a very noted little comedian,” said Sir Thomas. “ Seeing him one night at the theatre, during a visit to London, I was so much taken with the admirable way he played a ghost that I brought him to Moyle that he might play the same part here.”

“ My dear uncle ! ” exclaimed the young lady.

“ Ay, sweet niece, Jimmy Twitcher played Red Cap before Grambla, repeating the words I had taught him. There is yet more you shall know, though I desire you not to repeat this story. I caused a sum of money to be hidden in a certain spot upon the summit of Great Gwentor ; and it was the business of my little comedian to lead Grambla to that place.”

“ Why did you reward him ? ”

“ To ruin such a rogue you shall find no surer way than to provide him with money. Owing to my action he was able to mix with his superiors ; and, as I had foreseen, he then became too proud to own for his friends the folk of Moyle. The new friends despised, while the former friends grew to hate, the upstart. I perceived also that, with money in hand, he would live well, become idle, fall into indifference ; and in sluggishness of mind he was less likely to act with malevolence against Clabars and myself.”

“ There was no witchcraft, Betty,” cried my lady.

“ That is a name by which we frighten and subdue the superstitious,” said Sir Thomas. “ The learned rule by it ; some of the vulgar live by it. But the thing itself has no existence. Do not suppose, dear child, that the Almighty allows the laws of nature to be

suspended—even for a moment—by mere mortals. Mother Gothel was my accomplice in this matter, and without her aid I could not have succeeded. Say nothing, Betty. Let the people of Moyle repeat their version of this story of Red Cap, until it becomes a portion of their folk-lore. Let them believe I raised a ghost by enchantments. It will be an ill day when the vulgar discover that the gentry do not possess the power of working wonders.”

“I would rather,” said Elizabeth, “that the truth should prevail.”

“But then, my love,” said Lady Just, as she led the girl away, “you are somewhat in advance of the age you live in.”

It was a merry scene in Coinagehall that night. Jimmy Twitcher entertained the company with uncommon brilliance; but then he was going home to be married, and this knowledge made him clever at his art. Cherry and Cay sat in a corner, holding each other's hand in simple fashion, although neither felt in the mood to run away. Clabar watched the lovers with a frown—which was apt to relax when he glanced at Twitcher—wondering how his son-in-law would manage the long-neglected farm, and gradually discovering beauties in his daughter. Elizabeth and Martin were radiant, and hard by David beheld them with a satisfied expression. Against the walls stood servants rocking with riotous laughter. Even Father Benedict looked in to smile at folly while he tapped his snuff-box; for the family, he knew, proposed to return shortly to fair Italy; and as Father Benedict could not marry, by far the next best thing was going home.

But a great commotion arose outside, as though the days of haunting were not over. The outer door was opened, and Toby Penrice fought his way through the servants and appeared in the presence of the company.

"Sir Thomas, I have been cheated. I have lost my fortune, and now I have lost my hundred guineas—and to-morrow I'll lose my Creature for ever and a day."

"Turn this rude fellow out," cried Lady Just.

"One moment, Manuela," said her husband. "Explain your words, Toby. How have you been cheated?"

"Master Grambla, sir, was trustee of my fortune, and he went and sunk it in the sea. He used me like a dog, sir. He kicked me out of this house. Then he says to me, 'I'll give ye money, if ye burn down Halcyon Cottage,' but I wouldn't do it, sir. I'm an honest man, I told Master Grambla, and a decent reputation is worth more than money. Last evening he comes to me again and says, 'Burn Halcyon to-night, and I'll pay you a hundred guineas in the morning.' And he gives me writing, sir. And, sir, I have it here. So I go to Creature and ask, 'For the last time will ye have me?' And she answers, 'For the last time, nay.' Then I say, 'If I put a hundred guineas in your lap to-morrow, will ye have me?' And she answers, 'yea.' So I go off and do my duty. I set alight to Halcyon Cottage. Then I have the politeness to warn Master Clabar, who has always been a friend of mine——"

"Stay, blockhead!" Sir Thomas interrupted. "Can you not understand you are confessing to a crime which may send you to the gallows?"

"Stars of heaven! I never thought of that," mumbled Toby, coming to his senses and scratching his foolish head. "If I have done wrong, sir, I apologise most humbly. I have a great respect for you, sir. But a hundred guineas, sir!"

"What more have you to say?"

"I have been all day, sir, hunting for Master Grambla to make him pay the money what he owes me. 'Twas getting dark, sir, as I came over Great Gwentor; and there I found him, sir. Master Grambla

was lying upon a great flat stone—upon his back, sir—and he had a spade in his hand, sir ; and I thought he had been digging and was now asleep. I stood, sir, and called him names, which I would not wish to repeat before your ladies, unless, sir, they particularly desire me to do so ; but Master Grambla wouldn't wake up, sir, and he wouldn't answer, sir. And I knew if Master Grambla couldn't answer insults, sir, he must be mighty sick. So I went up and touched him with my shoe, and he was stiff, sir. And I touched him with my hand, and he was cold, sir. And he grinned horrid, sir."

"Dead !" Sir Thomas muttered.

"I believe, sir, Master Grambla had eaten food what don't agree with folks. His eyes were like coals of fire, sir. And he was wet, sir, with the dews of heaven."

"Let the simple fellow go," said Sir Thomas, as the servants advanced to lay hands on Toby. "And, Twitcher, no more merriment. Seek to gain a little knowledge, fool, and burn no more houses ; for you are not likely to receive a second pardon. Put out the candles ! Our diversion is over."

Jacob Grambla was buried at the break of day beneath the flat stone upon which the body was discovered ; but at a later date parishioners of Moyle church-town agreed he had been snatched away from earth during the burning of Bezurrel Castle ; for many of those present declared they had seen the meagre figure of the attorney floating in the midst of the flames, ascending from the falling walls, and finally disappearing in the tempestuous smoke above.

Yet in a curious manner the provisions of his unsigned will became carried into effect. Cherry Cay and her husband were both earnest nonconformists ; indeed the former robber became noted as a preacher ; and Clabar in his old age yielded to them, deserted the church, and embraced the new religion with a convert's

zeal. So that Coinagehall during the four Georges won great fame as a temple of nonconformity. And a meeting-place of Methodists stands upon its site to-day.

Not far away are mounds of grass which conceal the old foundations of Bezurrel ; for the castle never was rebuilt. Yet some memories of the Justs survive ; especially of the lady of that house, who attained the great age of ninety-six, and was happy even to the day of her death.

THE END

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